

Introduction to the Web-based version

The words contained in the original manuscript are largely from the Gupapuyŋu dialect. Originally spoken by a numbers of clans in the region close to Gapuwiyak (see map), Gupapuyŋu is one of a several Yolŋu dialects currently spoken in the communities of Milingimbi, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak and Galiwin'ku. There are however a small number of words from other dialects in Beulah Lowe's dictionary (see baymatthun, maltjaṅa, walirr etc.); and where these occur the dialect is cited.

In all, a total of 4,120 words have been reproduced in .pdf format and these are alphabetically sorted according to the Yolŋu alphabet developed by Beulah Lowe. Consequently there is a slight variation in the order of some words from the original hand-typed manuscript which was not entirely systematic. If viewed in Adobe Reader 6.0 the [search function](#) allows the reader to search for all occurrences of a particular word in either English or Yolŋu Matha (Gupapuyŋu).

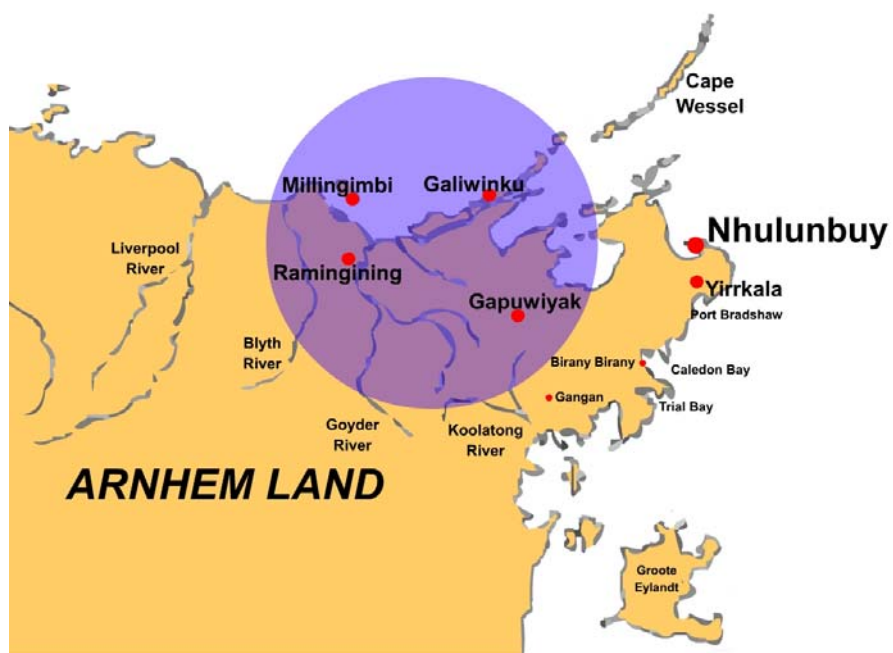
A small number of words (approx 20) have been removed from the wordlist in consultation with the custodians of particular Yolŋu ceremonies. Such references to the particular law and ceremonies of these clans would cause offence if such words were to be made public.

Apart from these few changes, the meanings and spellings of words are essentially the same as in the original typed manuscript. In addition, some notes on the composition of entries and any abbreviations used have been included to assist in using the dictionary.

In lieu of the Conversational Course and Grammar Lessons that Beulah Lowe produced to be used alongside the dictionary, some brief notes on pronunciation and grammar have been included (see below).

Lastly, it should be noted that the dictionary may contain the names of some recently deceased Yolŋu persons, and so care should be exercised when using any of the words from this dictionary, to avoid causing offence.

- The area of Arnhem Land where Gupapuyunu is spoken.



Description of Entries

- **Yolŋu word:** The main word being defined. The order in which each word is sorted is based on the English alphabet and this dictionary can be used very much like a normal English dictionary. There are some differences, however, as there are some letters in Yolŋu Matha that are not found in English and vice versa. The Yolŋu alphabet on which the entries are sorted are listed below (See: Orthography and Pronunciation).

A footnote number indicates that it is one of a pair of homonyms – two words that sound and are spelt the same but have unrelated meanings. For example: ‘The *bank* of a river’ and ‘A *bank* that loans money’.

- **Part of Speech:** i.e. adjective, noun, intransitive verb (see Grammar notes below).
- **Definition:** where there are several related meanings or uses these are numbered separately.
- **Variant :** Other possible pronunciations or spellings.
- **From:** The language from which this word has been borrowed, for example - English, Macassan.
- **Moiety:** Most things in Yolŋu culture, including words, belong to one of two halves – Dhuwa and Yirritja. This is culturally very important information and is listed where it has been recorded.
- **Lng:** Citing the language a word belongs to when that word is not Gupapuyŋu, for example Djambarrpuyŋu, Djinaŋ.
- **Morph:** The base word and morpheme (a suffix) where the suffixation process has created an irregular form of the word.
- **Gram:** additional grammatical information.
- **Prdm:** Specifies when a word is plural or singular (it’s paradigm).
- **Male/Female:** Gives the alternate word for that gender.
- **Usage:** Additional comments on the manner or context of use.
- **Note:** Any additional information.

N.B. Headings in italics appear in this form in the body of the dictionary.

Abbreviations

Parts of Speech

<i>adj</i>	adjective
<i>adv</i>	adverb
<i>intj</i>	interjection
<i>n</i>	noun
<i>vintr</i>	intransitive verb
<i>vtr</i>	transitive verb

Grammar and Language

<i>Lng</i>	language
<i>Loc</i>	location
<i>Opp</i>	opposite (antonym)
<i>pl</i>	plural
<i>sng</i>	singular
<i>Syn</i>	synonym

Orthography and Pronunciation

The orthography used in this dictionary was developed by Beulah Lowe and has become the standard used today in all Yolŋu communities. It is based on the English alphabet and uses corresponding letters wherever possible. Where the sound does not exist in English devices such as combinations of two letters or digraphs and underlines have been used to represent these sounds. In addition, three non-English symbols - ä ŋ and ‘ - have been adopted. It is important to note that digraphs are not two separate sounds such as the ‘ny’ in **many**, but represent a single sound just as the ‘sh’ does in the English word **‘shoe’**.

The following is the Yolŋu alphabet. It is based on the order of the English alphabet. The brackets { around two letters indicate that these are treated as the same letter when sorting. Each letter is accompanied by an English approximation and an explanation of how it is to be pronounced.

The Yolŋu Alphabet

<i>Letter</i>	<i>English Approx.</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
'	uh.	The apostrophe represents a glottal stop. It is made by stopping airflow right at the back of the throat. This sound is found in English as the break between vowels 'uh. ah.' used when reprimanding a small child.
{ a	around	The 'a' vowel has both a long and a short version. This is the short 'a' such as in 'around'.
	ä	The dots make this a long 'a' like in 'father'. Yolŋu call this "buthurumirri" or 'having ears'.
b	ball	This sound is the same as as the English 'b', however it is not followed by a puff of air (that is, aspirated) as it is in English.
{ d	doll	English 'd' but again, not aspirated.
	<u>d</u>	- Similar to a 'd' but is pronounced by curling the tongue back so the underside of the tip touches the roof of the mouth. Don't overdo it. Just touch the tongue to the small ridge behind the teeth. It creates an r sounding quality before the letter similar to the sound of 'card' in American English. This is called the retroflex tongue position and is indicated by the underline.
dh	-	This is a diagraph representing just one sound. It sounds much like an English 'd' but the addition of the <i>h</i> indicates the sound should be made with the tip of the tongue poking out between the teeth. This tongue position is known as interdental.
dj	judge	The letter is just one sound similar to the English 'j'. While saying the letter 'j' notice the middle of your tongue is pushed up against the roof of the mouth. In Yolŋu Matha the tongue is pushed further forward so that the tip of the tongue is down behind the bottom teeth. This is the lamino-dental tongue position.
e	peat	This is the long version of the 'i' vowel. It sounds like the 'i' in 'pit' but is held longer such as the vowel sound in 'peat'.
g	gull	Similar to English 'g' but again, not aspirated
i	pit	The short version of the 'i' vowel. Sounds like the 'i' in 'pit'.
k	ski	Similar to English 'k' but again, not aspirated

}	l	leaf	This is the same as the English word ‘leaf’ but not the same as the ‘l’ in mall .
	<u>l</u>	-	The underline indicates a retroflex sound so it sounds like an ‘l’ but is made with the tongue curled back (See d).
	m	mother	Equivalent to English ‘m’.
}	n	nectar	Equivalent to English ‘n’.
	<u>n</u>	-	An ‘n’ sound made with the tongue curled back in retroflex tongue position. (See d).
	nh	-	An ‘n’ sound made with the tongue between the teeth in interdental position. (See dh)
	ny	onion	Similar to the English ‘n’ in the word ‘ new ’. The tongue is in the same position as for <i>dj</i> – the lamino-dental position.
	ŋ	singer	The letter ŋ is the same as the English sound in the word ‘ singer ’. It is made with the back of the tongue against the roof of the mouth in the velar position. Unlike in English, this sound can also occur at the beginning of words.
	o	or	This is equivalent to the English vowel in ‘ poor ’ and ‘ paw ’ and ‘ pore ’ and ‘ pour ’ and ‘ or ’. It is a long vowel. Unlike in English, this sound is always spelt with an ‘o’ in Yolŋu Matha.
	p	spy	Similar to English ‘p’ but again, not aspirated
}	r	round	This sounds similar to the ‘r’ sound in English but is also made by curling the tongue back to retroflex position.
	rr	butter (said fast)	This a flapped r. It is just a quick tap of the tongue tip against the roof of the mouth, just behind the teeth. It is equivalent to the ‘t’ in the word ‘ butter ’ when it is said very fast. Another way to think about it is a as rolled or trilled ‘r’ bur with only one roll.
}	t	tall	Similar to English ‘t’ but again, not aspirated
	<u>t</u>	-	A ‘t’ sound made with the tongue curled back in retroflex tongue position. (See d).
	th	-	Be careful, this is <i>not</i> pronounced like the English ‘ theme ’. Rather it sounds like a hard ‘t’ but is made in interdental position with the tongue protruding between the teeth.
	tj	chair	Similar to the English sound ‘ch’ in ‘ chair ’ but with the tongue pushed further forward into lamino-dental position (See <i>dj</i>)

u	put	This short vowel is equivalent to the English ‘u’ in ‘put’.
w	wool	Similar to English ‘w’
y	yellow	Similar to English ‘y’

So to revise, the letters m, n, l, w, and y are very similar to their English equivalents.

For the letters b, p, d, t, g, and k the position of the tongue is the same as the English equivalents, however they are not aspirated (i.e followed by a puff of air).

The letters dh, th and nh are known as interdental as they are made with the tip of the tongue between the teeth.

The underlined letters d, t, l and n, and also r are known as retroflexed as the tongue curls back so the underside of the tip touches the roof of the mouth. It creates an r sounding quality before the letter.

The letters dj, tj and ny are similar to the English j, ch, and the n in **new** but the tongue is pushed further forward so that the tip of the tongue is down behind the bottom teeth. This is the lamino-dental position.

The letter ŋ is the ‘ng’ sound in ‘singer’. The tongue is in the velar position. Unlike in English it can occur at the beginning of words.

The letter rr is a flapped r. It is equivalent to the t in the word **butter** when it is said very fast.

Finally, there are six vowels – a long and short ‘a’ and ‘i’ plus a ‘u’ and an ‘o’. The long vowels (ä e and o) are only ever found in the first syllable of a word.

It is also worth noting that the voiceless consonants, p, th, t, ṭ, tj and k never occur at the start of a word or after a nasal.

The following table shows the consonants grouped according to how they are pronounced and the position of the tongue.

	bilabial	interdental	alveolar	retroflex	lamino-dental	velar	glottal
Stops	b p	dh th	d t	<u>d</u> <u>t</u>	dj tj	g k	‘
Nasals	m	nh	n	<u>n</u>	ny	ŋ	
Laterals			l	<u>l</u>			
Other	w		rr	r		y	

Also note hyphens are used between compound words. Compound words are two unique words that have been joined together to create a new meaning that is different from the sum of the original meanings. For example, dhä means *mouth* and bulyun means *be of water* but together dhä-bulyun means *croaking of frogs*.

Search Function

To effectively use the Adobe Reader 6.0 search function to search for words containing non-standard English characters viz. (ä , ð , ñ , Ì , ù , ŋ) the following keyboard strokes are required:

For	ä	type	<
For	ð	type	[
“	ñ	“]
“	Ì	“	`
“	ù	“	=
“	ŋ	“	\

Example : to search for ñäñdi

type ‘Ctrl F’ to bring up a search window,

then type in \<][i

the desired search results will appear displaying 4 entries. These can all be viewed by clicking on the search results one-by-one.

Grammar

The grammar of Gupapuyŋu is very different to that of English and is a complex and intricate system that has filled entire books. The language learner is referred to Beulah Lowes Grammar Lessons in Gupapuyŋu developed in conjunction with this dictionary. Other reference grammars are also available (see the [Publications](#) page). Here we will mention only some important points relevant to this dictionary.

Suffixes

In Gupapuyŋu, new words are regularly derived from others either by adding a suffix or compounding two words.

Suffixes (or morphemes) can be attached to nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs to perform a wide range of tasks. Attached to nouns they may indicate case, ownership, location etc. Attached to verbs they form part of the tense system just as the ‘-ed’ in ‘walked’ indicates the past tense. These are grammatical functions and the effect they have on meaning is always regular and as such do not need to be included in the dictionary.

Adjectives and verbs can be formed from the noun by attaching certain suffixes, as in the example below.

Dhuwala wäŋa gapumiriw

‘This place has no water (is waterless)’

In this example the adjective *gapumiriw* ‘waterless’ is made up of the noun *gapu* ‘water’ and the suffix *-miriw* ‘not possessing/without’. This is just as the English word is made up of ‘water’ and ‘-less’.

In most instances the new meaning is regular and is easily devisable as in the above example. However, the new meaning can sometimes differ from what we might expect. This can be because it refers to cultural information or connotations very different to our own. This is the same as a new learner of English not understanding the term ‘Pub crawl’. Thus, Yolŋu people may see a connection where we see none. Other times, it may be that the original connection has been lost or changed. Only when the meaning is not predictable has the word and suffix been entered in the dictionary.

Verbs

There are four possible forms (or conjugations) of verbs. The form listed in the dictionary is what Beulah Lowe termed the Primary form (note for Linguists: This is the definite, yesterday, past tense form). These four forms interact with several other particles to form the complex tense, mood and aspect system of Yolŋu Matha. The Secondary, Tertiary and Quaternary forms vary depending on the ending of Primary form. Read along the row to see how they change.

Group & Ending	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary	English
1	djāma	djāma	djāma	djāma	work
2 -a	luka	luki	lukana	lukanha(ra)	eat, drink
3 -i	marrtji	marrtji	marrtjina	marrtjinya(ra)	go, walk
4 -un	mukthun	mukthurru	mukthurruna	mukthuna(ra)	quiet
5 -ma	nhāma	nhāngu	nhāŋala	nhānha(ra)	see, look
6 -irri	wandirri	wandi	wandina	wandinya(ra)	run
7 -an	gurrupan	gurrupulu	gurrupara	gurrupana(ra)*	give

* the bracketed (ra) is optional. It is most usually omitted unless a further suffix is to be added.

There are also some irregular verbs whose forms do not follow this pattern. Group 1 is also notable in that these words do not conjugate. They are usually borrowed words from the Macassan language or English.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Whilst only a few verbs are marked as transitive or intransitive in the dictionary, the distinction between these two types of verbs is an important one. This is because, unlike in English, Yolŋu verbs are either one or the other, transitive *or* intransitive, but very rarely both.

An intransitive verb is one that occurs with only one participant, usually the ‘doer’ of an action.

Narra ŋāthina
‘I cried’

A transitive verb has two participants, a doer and someone or thing the action was done to.

Ŋayi gana bathana gapu
'He boiled water'

In English, the same verb is often used in either case - with one participant or two. Here is an example using the verb 'boil'.

One participant – intransitive.

'The water boiled'.

Two participants – transitive.

'He boiled **the water**'

This is rarely the case in Gupapuyŋu. Usually a different verb must be used in either case.

In the example above, the verb *bathana* is transitive and cannot be used in an intransitive sentence like 'The water boiled' as it must have two participants

Instead a different verb must be used – one that is intransitive.

Gapu gana buŋbuŋdhurruna
'The water boiled'

Thus, it is important to know if a verb is transitive or intransitive so that the speaker knows which context or scenarios it can be used in.