Shoehorning Yolnu language names into the ISO 639-3 standard

Cathy Bow
Acknowledgements

Michael Christie, Brian Devlin, John Greatorex (CDU)
Melanie Wilkinson (NT Dept Education)
Marilyn McLellan, Chuck Grimes (AuSIL)
Dany Adone (U Köln)
Waymamba, Mätjarra, Dhanгал, Räкay (Yolŋu elders)
Introduction

* Identification / naming of languages highly contested
* Standardisation as a useful goal
* Unique codes are important for digital documentation
  * Consistency
  * Discoverability
* Names are too ambiguous for search engines
* But ideal standard is virtually impossible
Standard codes

- International Standard ISO 639-3
- Recommended for use in language documentation (e.g. OLAC) and other fields (W3C)
- Used by many archives and language documenters
- Flat structure is simple but masks many complexities
- No discussion of ISO 639-5 (language families) or 639-6 (language variants)
Yolngu languages

★ ‘Yolŋu Matha’ (‘people’s tongue’) describes a group of related languages from North East Arnhem Land
★ Isolate of Pama-Nyungan group
★ Among the strongest in Australia – culture, art, music, bilingual education
Classification of languages

- General agreement on Yolŋu as distinctive ‘bloc’
- Complicated question about how many languages, dialects, varieties
- Each ‘clan’ (bäpumu) has own language variety (matha)
- Mutual intelligibility among contiguous varieties
- Multilingualism, ‘mother tongue’ and father’s language
- Linguistic distinctions
Linguistic Differences

* Phonological (eg stop contrast)
* Morphological (eg pronominal stems)
* Syntactic (eg metrical tense distinctions)
* Pragmatic (eg contrastive discourse suffix)

* Example of vowel deletion: (Wilkinson 1991)

Gup.  dhuwala+nydja  yatjkurru  mirithirri  bili+na  ĕrara  dhipuŋuru+nydja
Djamb. dhuwan=dja  yatjkurr  mirithirr  bili+n  ĕrara  dhipuŋur+nydja
"this/here"+PROM  bad  Intensifer  COMPL+SEQ  1sg  "this/here"-ABL+PROM

This is really bad. I'm finished here
Mapping Yolnu languages
Classification of languages

- Dhuwala
- Dhuwal
- Dhay’yi
- Dhaŋu
- Djaŋu
- Nhaŋu (Yan-Nhaŋu)
- Ritharrŋu
- Djinaŋ
- Djinba
## Classification of languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘THIS’ level</th>
<th>‘Clan’ level</th>
<th>Moiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Dhuwala</td>
<td>Gumatj, Gupapuyŋuŋu, Manŋgalili, etc</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Dhuwal</td>
<td>Djambarrpuynuŋu, Djapu, Daatiwuy, etc</td>
<td>Dh</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Dhay’yi</td>
<td>Dhalwaŋuŋu, Djamark</td>
<td>Y/Dh</td>
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<td>* Dhaŋu</td>
<td>Galpu, Golumala, Daymil, Wangumí</td>
<td>Y/Dh</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Djaŋu</td>
<td>Djaŋu, Warramiri</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>* Ritharrŋu</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu, Wägilak, Yakuy</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Nhaŋu</td>
<td>Yan-Nhaŋu, Gurjindi, Garmalanggá</td>
<td>Y/Dh</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Djinaŋ</td>
<td>Djinaŋ, Wurlaki</td>
<td>Y/Dh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Djinba</td>
<td>Djinba, Ganalbinjú</td>
<td>Y/Dh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other versions

* Southern Yolngu
  * Southern-Eastern Yolngu
    * Dhuwal-Dhuwala
  * Eastern Dhuwal-Dhuwala
    * Djambarampuyngu
    * Gupapuyngu
    * Madampa
    * Manggalili
  * Western Dhuwal-Dhuwala
    * Dhuwal
    * Datiwuy
    * Djapu
    * Gumatj

Dixon 2002
Response of a Yolŋu elder

Dr Waymamba Gaykamaŋu (Milingimbi):

Gupapuyŋu and Gumatj are “both Dhuwala but completely different

songlines, country, relationships

No accurate way of matching Yolŋu systems with balanda (Western) classifications
# Additional fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dhäruk</td>
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<td>Dhuwal</td>
<td>Dhaŋu</td>
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<td>Wangurni</td>
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<td>Dhurkay</td>
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<td>ṿuku wäŋa</td>
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<td>Boruwuy</td>
<td>Dhälinybuy</td>
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<td>Moiety</td>
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<td>Dhuwa</td>
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<td>(Mala)</td>
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<td>Meaning</td>
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</table>
ISO 639-3

- Standard for representation of names of languages
- Registration authority is SIL International
- Linked to Ethnologue but distinct
- Completely flat structure – does not allow hierarchy
Previous discussion of ISO

* PARADISEC Conference 2013
* Morey, Post, Friedman: The language codes of ISO 639: A premature, ultimately unobtainable, and possibly damaging standardization
* Musgrave, Barwick, Walsh, Treloar: Language Identifying Codes: Remaining Issues, Future Prospects
  * Walsh’s demonstration of ‘Yolngu flop’ – invisible on Ethnologue

A circular description of Yolngu languages
ISO codes for Yolngu

* Walsh describes a “linguistic tardis”

* **Dhuwal [duj]** - population 600
  * Dialects: Datiwuy, Dhuwal, Dhuwaya, Djapu, Liyagalawumirr, Liyagawumirr, Marrakulu, Marrangu

* **Djambarrpuyngu [djr]** - classified as Dhuwal - popn 2760

* **Gumatj [gnn]** - classified as ‘Dhuwal’(a) - popn 240

* **Gupapuyngu [guf]** - classified as Dhuwal - popn 330
ISO codes for Yolnu

- 7 of 9 ‘this’ level languages have codes
  - Dhangu/Djangu, Yan-Nhangu, Dayi, Dhuwal, Ritharrngu, Djinang, Djinba
- Plus three significant ‘clan’ languages have codes
  - Djambarrpuyngu, Gupapuyngu, Gumatj
- (which belong to the above categories)
## ISO codes for Yolnu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'THIS' level</th>
<th>'Clan' level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Dhuwala</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Dhalwaŋu, Djarwark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Dhaŋu [dhg]</td>
<td>Galpu, Golumala, Daymil, Wangumiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Djaŋu</td>
<td>Djaŋu, Warramiri</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Ritharrŋu [rit]</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu, Wägilak, Yakuy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Nhaŋu</td>
<td>Yan-Nhaŋu [jay], Gurjindi,</td>
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<td>* Djinaŋ [dji]</td>
<td>Djinaŋ, Wurlaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Djinba [djb]</td>
<td>Djinba, Ganalbinya</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Living Archive

- Digitisation of language materials from the NT
- ARC LIEF project between CDU, NT Dept Education, Batchelor Institute, NT Library, Catholic Ed, ANU
- 25+ languages

www.cdu.edu.au/laal
Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages

Title: Mirinyuŋu Goŋmiyin
Translated title: The whale's story

Illustrator: Musco, Edel
Translator: Gurruliwi, Marilyn

Language: Dharu
Language notes: Warramiri language

Place: Galiwin’ku
Publisher: Galiwin’ku Literature Production Centre
Published at: Galiwin’ku, N.T.

Description notes: First Edition in Djambarrpuyŋu: Translated by Helen Rikaawuku. Produced by SRA Inc. and the Literature Production Centre, Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island

Category: Narrative
Keyword: whales

Reproduction note: Hard copy taken from Shepherdson College

More...
Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages

Title: Mirinyuŋu Goŋmiyin
Translated title: The whale’s story

Illustrator: [Musco, Edel]
Translator: Gurrumwi, Marilyn

Language: Dhanu
Language notes: Gälpu/Golumala/Naymil languages

Place: Galiwin'ku
Publisher: Shepherdson CEC Literature Production Centre
Published at: Galiwinku, N.T.
Published: 1997

Description notes: Produced by SRA Ass. Inc. and the Literature Production Centre, Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island. ©;
Illustrator name not listed in book, taken from other versions of same book.

Category: Narrative
Keyword: whales
Reproduction note: Hard copy taken from Shepherdson College
Size: 42.9 x 30.5 cm
Requests for change

- LAAL requested changes at ‘clan’ level
- Create new codes to allocate to books in LAAL
- Split some ‘this’ level languages to create new codes
- Create Yolngu ‘macrolanguage’ (cf Arabic, Chinese)
- Rename ‘Djangu’ back to ‘Dhangu’ (changed 2012)
- 17 requests in 2013
### ISO 639-3 Index of Change Requests from 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CR Number</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Language Family</th>
<th>Affected Identifier</th>
<th>Language Name</th>
<th>Change Type</th>
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<td>Create</td>
<td>Rejected 2014-02-03</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Requests rejected

*SIL International ISO 639-3 Registration Authority response to request to split Dhuwal:

“The RA notes that the eight varieties are said to be clan languages that are ‘significantly intelligible’ as stated in the request. Since they are intelligible, they should be considered part of the same language for purposes of ISO 639-3.”
Requests rejected

“The request to create the code [ynm] for *Yolngu* (macrolanguage) is rejected. The request to create a Yolngu macrolanguage was a consequence of the requests no. 2013-025 and 2013-026 to split the codes for Dhangu [dhg] and Dhuwal [duj]. *Since those two requests were rejected, there was no need to create the macrolanguage.*”
New approach to requests

* Tidy up ‘this’ level
  * Add Dhuwala and Djanju – 6 separate forms
  * Existing Dhanju [dhg] code includes Djanju so need to retire and replace [dhg]
* Demonstrate linguistic differences
Alternative systems

- Glottolog
- AUSTLANG (AIATSIS)
- ASCL (used by ABS for census)
- Multi-Tree

New search by a language name: Yolngu

Back
Number of records found: 7

Click a language name to view information

Click 'Show names' to see the details of search. Shows the degree of match between the name searched for. The name you have searched explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Show names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhuwaya</td>
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<td>Show names</td>
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<td>Ritharrngu</td>
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<td>Dhay'yi</td>
<td>Show names</td>
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<td>Dhiyakuy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djinang</td>
<td>Show names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djinba</td>
<td>Show names</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preferred solution

* Three codes for each Yolŋu book in Living Archive
* Yolŋu – to allow browse/search across all sub-groups
* ‘this’ level – to aggregate these together
* ‘clan’ level – to follow identification within book

YOL-DHG-GGN
- Yolŋu
  - Dhaŋu
  - Gälpu/Golumala/Daymil
Other issues

- Community consultation – how wide?
- Problem of Dhuwaya – koine language of Yirrkala
- Ambiguity of Dhuwal (koine and ‘this’ level)
- Retrospective effects of proposed changes
- Validation through representation
Summary / Conclusion

* Not a unique situation, even in Australia
  * Bininj Gun-wok, Western Desert languages
* Necessary trade-off in desire to represent complex structures in a simple, consistent manner
* ‘Perfect’ system does not exist
* Remains a contested space
Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages

A digital archive of endangered literature in Indigenous languages of the Northern Territory

www.cdu.edu.au/laal

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Add new stories
Update Materials
Download and print
Work with language authorities
Read online
Correct errors

Follow us on twitter: twitter.com/living_archive
Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/laalanguages
Language and Peoples Thesaurus

Click on a term to display the complete thesaurus record. Non-preferred terms are in italics. For more information on the structure of the thesaurus and further search options, read Language Help.

Yolngu languages (NT SD53)

New Search  Show Hierarchy  Search MURA  All

Used For
Murungic languages
Murungin language (N117.1)
N117.1 (language code)

Broader Term
Pama-Nyungan language family

Narrower Term
Dhangu language group
Dhuyyi / Dha?i language group (N118) (NT SD53-07)
Dhuval languages (NT SD53)
Dhuvala languages (NT SD53)
Djiangu languages
Djinang languages (NT SD53)
Djinba languages (NT SD53-02)
Nhangu languages
Ritharrngu / Ridharrngu language group (N104) (NT SD53-07)
Yolngu languages - Other (NT SD53-03)

New search by a language name: Yolngu

Back
Number of records found: 7

Click a language name to view information
Click ‘Show name’ to see the details of each record:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glottocode</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoin1234</td>
<td>Yolngu Sign Language</td>
<td>Village Sign Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yolnu Matha consists of about six mutually intelligible languages divided into about thirty clan varieties and perhaps twelve different dialects, each with its own Yolnu name. Put together, there are about 4600 speakers of Yolnu Matha. While there is extensive variation between these dialects, there is generally common mutual intelligibility, hence the umbrella group of Yolnu Matha. The linguistic situation is very complicated, since each of the 30 or so clans also has a named language variety. Dixon (2002) distinguishes the following:[2]

- Dhangu
  - Dhanju
  - Nhānu/Jarnangu (Golpa)
  - Djanju
- Dhuwal
  - Dhuwal (Dhay'yi, Gupapuyngu)
  - Ritharrŋu
- Djinang
  - Djinanŋ
  - Djinba

Bowern (2011) adds the varieties in parentheses as distinct languages.
Naming of languages

Even at ‘this’ level

- Dhaŋu / Djaŋu - ISO story
- Ritharrŋu (Ritarungo) = Yakuy = Dhiyakuy

Naming of discrete language entities for coding

- Spelling distinctions
  - Dayi, Dha y’yi, Dha’yi, Dha’i?
Mapping Yolnu languages

Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages

Dhuwala  Dhuwal
Yolngu - English Dictionary

Beulah Lowe