



Aboriginal rock engraving at Bondi, Sydney

# A Tourist's Guide to the Sydney Language

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## Meeting the Sydney people: yura (eora)

When the First Fleet of eleven ships arrived from England to set up the convict colony in Sydney on 26 January 1788 it numbered somewhere between 1000 and 1350 people. Although there is little agreement on the precise figure, it is known that the First Fleet included some 778 convicts, of whom 192 were women. There was a guard consisting of four companies of marines (168 men) to provide order. There were, too, five surgeons, and various skilled craftsmen; there were 40 wives of soldiers and their children, as well as members of the Royal Navy to crew the two permanent ships of the colony. These were the fleet flagship, the East Indiaman the *Sirius*, and a smaller brig acting as a tender, the *Supply*. Both remained when the nine merchant vessels that had transported the people and provisions left one by one to resume their normal shipping activities.

Governor Arthur Phillip, not long after first arrival, estimated the local Aboriginal population around the harbour and in neighbouring areas to be about 1500, made up of a number of different tribal groups or clans.

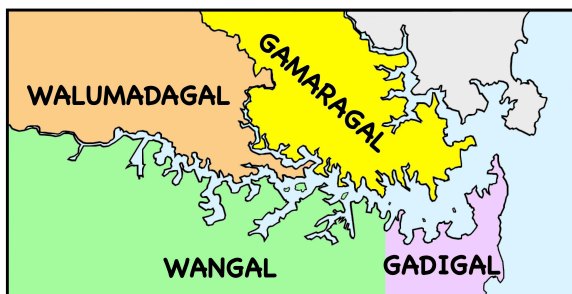


Fig. 1 Four principal clans of about thirty around Sydney in 1788

Although the local people were virtually outnumbered and overwhelmed from Day 1, they first greeted the newcomers with wary cordiality as might normally be extended to unknown visitors. When trees began to be cut down and the intention of the arrivals to stay was made plain, however, relations deteriorated, for the First Fleeters with their numbers, guns and fishing nets had soon made game and food hard to find. The way of life of the ages was permanently altered for the Aboriginal people.

## Learning the language

It was essential that the new authorities be able to communicate with the indigenous population and Governor Phillip made attempts to acquire the

language in December 1788 by capturing a local man. The unfortunate detainee, **Arabanoo**, was supposed to learn English and then teach his captors his own language, but he proved not to be a great linguist. The newcomers nevertheless made major discoveries, realising that, in contrast to the small densely populated land from which they had come, there was not a single language for the whole country—even groups within a few days' ride of the settlement did not fully understand one another.

## Disease outbreak

Suddenly, within a year-and-a-half, smallpox had broken out, devastating the local population while leaving almost untouched the Europeans with immunity conferred upon them by centuries of prior exposure. In some communities a fatality rate of over ninety per cent was reported. In April 1789, dead bodies were commonly to be found on the beaches and points of the coves of the harbour foreshores. Naval first lieutenant William Bradley wrote in early May:

From the great number of dead Natives found in every part of the Harbour, it appears that the smallpox had made a dreadful havoc among them.

Still in captivity after six months, Arabanoo too was to die of smallpox, on 18 May 1789. Phillip needed another informant and ordered Lieut. William Bradley to seize someone. This he managed to do, on 25 November 1789 capturing **Bennelong** (aged about 25) and **Coleby** (aged about 35) in Manly Cove, and writing afterwards 'it was by far the most unpleasant service I ever was ordered to execute'. Coleby escaped three weeks later, and Bennelong on 3 May 1790, going on to become Australia's most famous historical Aboriginal figure, remembered in Bennelong Point, site of the Sydney Opera House.

## Language groups around Sydney

The local language was spoken from the coast at Sydney west into the Blue Mountains, and from the Hawkesbury River to Appin in the south. Within this area, though, at least two and possibly three dialects were spoken: the coastal dialect, sometimes referred to as 'eora' (yura), and the inland dialect. This local language belonged to a group or 'nation', one of hundreds in the country. Today it is referred to as Dharug; no name was identified for it at the time.



Fig. 2 Tribes and languages around the wider Sydney region (map by Jim Kohen)

While all of the marines and naval personnel would have picked up a few words of the local language, and while some may have become moderately proficient, only one made a systematic attempt to record elements of the grammar as well as compiling a word list. That was 2nd Lieutenant William Dawes, aged 26.

### William Dawes (1762-1836)

Dawes the marine had been directed to act as officer of artillery, and as such he set up a defensive fortification consisting of several canons on a harbourside point some distance from the settlement, which became known as Dawes' Battery. Dawes had received a sound education, and was interested in science and more particularly in astronomy. Prior to his leaving England he had been asked, upon his arrival in Botany Bay, to establish an observatory from which to study and record a comet last seen in 1661, expected in the southern skies in 1789. He had been provided with equipment to do so and he set up this facility in the same area as his fortifications. He named it Maskelyne Point after the Astronomer Royal, his mentor, but it was his own name, Dawes, that was to stick to the site, today dominated by the southern abutment of the Harbour Bridge. This is where he lived, rather than with the others in Sydney Cove.

When the authorities went on exploring expeditions on foot, it was the meticulous Dawes who recorded distance by counting the paces, all day long. And it was Dawes the humanitarian who took the keenest interest in the Aboriginal population and their language. He listened to the

people around him when they came to his little house. He learnt; he checked and amended; and he practised speaking the language himself. He recorded his findings in two small notebooks. The most notable of the numerous informants who were to visit him was a teenage girl named **Patyegorang**.

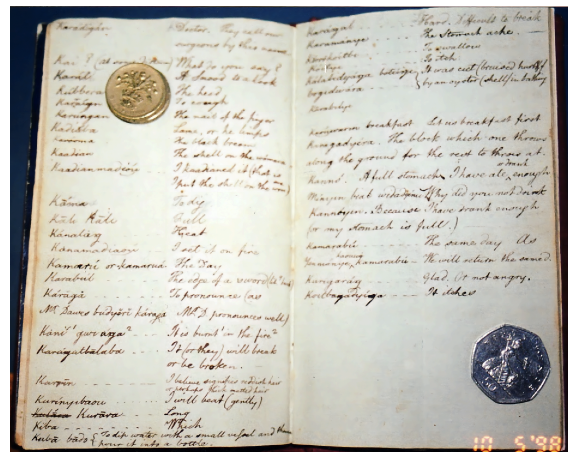


Fig. 3 Dawes' notebook 'a' featured model verbs; notebook 'b' contained vocabulary: nouns, verbs and sentences. All pages of the Dawes' notebooks, and a third Anon notebook, can be viewed at the School of Oriental and African Studies website <https://www.williamdawes.org/>.

Captain Watkin Tench of the marines wrote about the language in *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* [Library of Australian History, 1979, p. 291]:

Of the language of New South Wales I hoped to have subjoined to this work such an exposition . . . but the abrupt departure of Mr Dawes . . . precludes me from executing this part of my original intention, in which he had promised to cooperate with me; and in which he had advanced his researches beyond the reach of competition.

### An unfulfilled legacy

In mid December 1790 some clashes between the newcomers and the local people culminated in the fatal spearing, by resistance leader **Pemulwuy** of the Bidjigal clan, of the Governor's gamekeeper, John McIntyre, who had come to be dreaded and hated by Bennelong and his contemporaries. Presuming this attack to be unprovoked, Phillip ordered a punitive expedition to be undertaken, led by Captain Watkin Tench. This originally had the gruesome aim not only of capturing two of the Aboriginals but of returning with the heads of ten others in bags to serve as a lesson to them. The scope of the mission was later reduced, on Tench's

suggestion, to capturing six Aboriginals, two for hanging and the rest for sending to Norfolk Island. Dawes, after first refusing in writing to participate, reluctantly complied with the order. He later expressed his regret to Phillip at having done so, and made it clear that he would not take part in any such future expedition. This repudiation of authority was grounds for a court martial, to which he would have been subjected had he not been an officer of the marine forces. It was to prove a turning point for the worse for him. When Dawes' fellow marines were relieved, departing for England in the *Gorgon* on 18 December 1791, Dawes too left the colony, never to return. A year later, on 10 December 1792, Phillip too departed, in the *Atlantic*.

Dawes' two notebooks ended up in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, where they were rediscovered—and their significance realised—nearly two centuries later, in 1972. To these notebooks had been attached another, known as the Anon notebook, possibly compiled largely by David Collins, judge advocate and secretary of the colony.

If Dawes used the time on the slow ocean voyage back to England to prepare a more definitive grammar, this work has not so far been discovered. We are left with his notebooks—rich in detail yet with many tantalising holes. How could he have developed a system for recording sounds and progressively refined it without returning to the start to apply it consistently? How could he have not adjusted earlier spellings as he developed his transcription criteria? How could he have made provision for conjugating a few verbs in the present, past and future tenses, but not have provided in the notebooks a single fully conjugated example, in the present and past (although three are provided in the future)? How could he have failed to decline a single noun fully in its several cases?

Prof. G. Arnold Wood wrote [JRAHS\*Vol. 10, 1924]:

There is no man among the founders who ought to have given us so much information about himself and his views as Lieutenant Dawes, and there is no man among them who has given so little. He was the scholar of the expedition, man of letters and man of science, explorer, map maker, student of language, of anthropology, of astronomy, of botany, of surveying, and of engineering, teacher and philanthropist. The

duty to posterity of such a man, in such singular circumstances was that he should be always writing, and in fact he wrote nothing at all that can now be read.

Wood did not then know about Dawes' notebooks.

\* JRAHS: Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society

## Australian languages generally

When the First Fleet arrived in Sydney in 1788 it is thought that there were around 300 or so language groups on the land mass—and far more dialects—all associated with their own areas of the country. [<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/languages-alive>] So great was the disparity in power between the newcomers and the original inhabitants, however (muskets and cannons against spears and hatchets), and so incessant were the arrivals of shiploads of immigrants at the same time as the numbers of Aboriginal people were declining from new diseases and conflict, that language groups were largely overwhelmed when contact occurred, beginning in Sydney and spreading from there. Of those hundreds of language groups, today only about a dozen in the centre and north of the country remain in the flourishing state of being passed on to children.

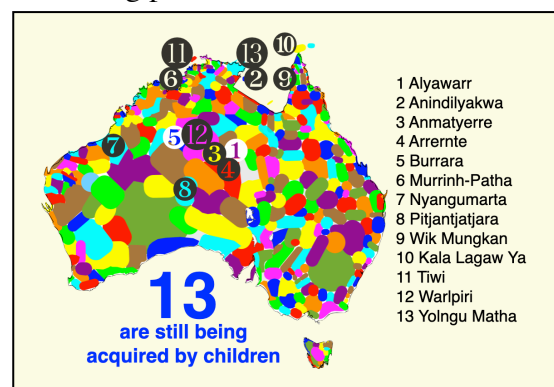


Fig. 4 Map showing where the surviving languages are located: all in the centre and north of Australia

## The Sydney language

There is no recognised name for the language spoken in Sydney at the time of the First Fleet's arrival although the writer has called it Biyal Biyal from at least one record identifying it as such, following the practice of Australian Aboriginal language names being based on the duplicated word for 'no' (*biyal* in Sydney).

In spite of the shortcomings in Dawes' notebooks alluded to above, from them some basic facts about the language spoken in Sydney in 1789 can be determined.

**Verbs** had a stem to which endings were attached to indicate, as in Latin (and English), tense.

*Past indicator:* The letter or sound ‘dy’ in verb endings indicated the past tense.

*Future indicator:* ‘b’ indicated the future.

Other endings conveyed aspects of the verb (continuing, i.e. ‘-ing’; completed or habitual) and more. There was no direct equivalent of the verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ of European languages.

**Nouns** also had a stem together with endings for up to a dozen ‘cases’, some being featured in the tables following. There was some particle duplication among these cases. Gender, and plurals, were differentiated only if needed.

**Pronouns** existed in ‘free’ (standalone) and ‘bound’ (attached as a suffix) forms as the tables following illustrate.

Unlike Latin (and English), the Sydney language distinguished ‘number’ between 2 and more than 2 (we-two/we-all, you-two/you-all, they-two/they-all), though Dawes did not formally explain how.

Various particles or endings conveyed nuances in meaning, which English and other European languages do by means of prepositions (*in, at, under, down* etc.), articles (*a, an* or *the*), conjunctions (*and, but*) and word order.

Words in Biyal Biyal, in fact, could be in any order (unlike in English, where ‘dog bites man’ and ‘man bites dog’ mean different things), because endings carried the necessary information, but generally word order followed a pattern based on significance to the statement.

Although Biyal Biyal was the first of the continent’s many languages to be overwhelmed and so to lose full fluent social validity as its speakers were decimated, nevertheless a limited usage persists. Owing to its being the first medium of contact with the Europeans, more of its words have entered the English vocabulary than from any other Australian indigenous source.

Some of these words are:

dingo	dog	wallaby	animal
dyin	woman	wombat	animal
geebung	plant	waratah	plant
waddy	club, stick	woomera	throwing stick

Table 1 Biyal Biyal words entering the English language

As is the case across Australia, in today’s Sydney many suburb and street names are words from the local Aboriginal language. Some Sydney suburb

names had particular meanings:

Berowra	shell, fishhook	Wahroonga	when
Chullora	ash	Yagoona	today, now
Mulgoa	swan	Yennora	walking

Table 2 Biyal Biyal words as names of Sydney suburbs

## Verbs

### Model verb—*banga*: to paddle (& to do, make)

FUTURE		
Singular	banga-ba-wu	I shall paddle
	banga-ba-mi	Thou ...
	banga-ba	He, she, it ...
Dual	banga-ba-ngun	We-two ...
		You-two ...
		They-two ...
Plural	banga-ba-nyi	We-all ...
		You-all ...
	banga-ba-wi	They-all ...
PAST		
Singular	banga-dya-wu	I did paddle
	banga-dyi-mi	Thou ...
	banga-dya	He, she, it ...
Dual	banga-dya-ngun	We-two ...
		You-two ...
		They-two ...
Plural	banga-dyi-nyi	We-all ...
		You-all ...
	banga-dya-wi	They-all ...

Table 3 Paradigm or model of *banga* in future and past tenses

The greyed-out areas are where no forms could be identified.

## Nouns

Grammarians may describe cases differently. Dative, in Latin, is used for ‘to’ and ‘for’, whereas the terms Allative (to) and Purposive (for) are sometimes preferred. Genitive may be called Possessive. Nominative in Latin is the subject of a sentence, but in Australian languages the term Ergative is used for the subject of a *transitive* sentence, and Absolutive for the subject of an *intransitive* sentence. In Australian languages, too, the object of a sentence is often left unmarked by a suffix, and is described by grammarians also as Absolutive, this term being used in combination with the symbol –Ø to indicate the absence of a suffix. In those instances where the object is marked, the term Accusative has been used in Table 4, below. Note that this analysis is provisional. There are not enough recorded examples to be sure.

Case	Function	example	Suffix
1a. ABSolutive: subject	intransitive subject	<i>Kolbi swims</i>	∅
1b. NOMinative: subject	transitive subject	<i>the eoras will see us</i>	-a, -ya
2a. ABSolutive: object	transitive object	<i>the whiteman sees Kolbi</i>	∅
2b. ACCusative: object [direct object]	transitive object	<i>Kolbi beat Bunang</i>	-na, -nga, -an [-ra, -a?]
3. ERGative: agent/actor	transitive subject	<i>the whiteman sees Kolbi</i>	-a, -ra [PLURAl ?]
4. LOCative	in, at, on	<i>he lives in the house</i>	-a, -ra, -wa
5. ALLative	to, towards	<i>he was going to the tree</i>	-gu
6. ABLative [ELAtive]	from	<i>he was coming from Parramatta</i>	-in
7. DATive [indirect object]	to, at	<i>talking to his wife; laughing at the dog</i>	-nyi, -nya, -na, -∅
8. PURPositive	goal of activity	<i>hunting for meat</i>	-u
9. CAUSAL	reason for event	<i>hunting (for meat) from hunger</i>	-in
10. INSTRUmental	with/using	<i>he hit him with a stick</i>	-ra
11. AVERsive	for fear of	<i>he is frightened of the dog</i>	
12. GENitive [POSSessive]	of	<i>the leg of the table</i>	-ayi

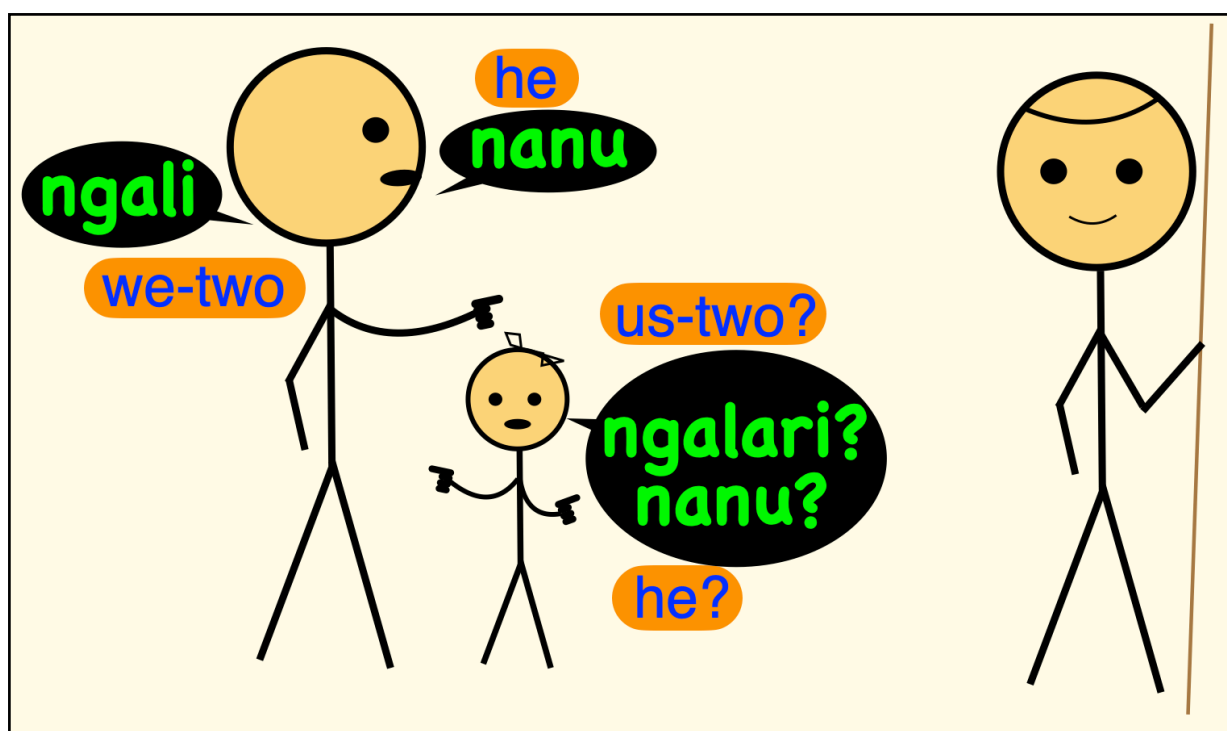
Table 4 Noun suffixes in various cases

### Examples of the use of suffixes

b	26	12.1	Galabi- <b>ya</b> wamayi Daringa- <b>nga</b>	Kolby scolded Tari'nga.	- <b>ya</b> NOM - <b>nga</b> ACC
b	34	10	ngwiyayi dali dyangura BREAD- <b>a</b> yura	He gave pork (and) bread to the eoras	- <b>a</b> ACC
b	34	7.2	bayi-dyi-nina WHITEMAN- <b>a</b> ngyinari Bandal- <b>na</b> , Bunda- <b>nga</b>	A white man beat us three, we three, Pundúl, Poonda (& myself, understood)	- <b>a</b> NOM - <b>na</b> , - <b>nga</b> ACC
b	32	14.2	na-ba-wi ngalari wayida-dwa'ra yura- <b>ra</b> na-ba	The eoras shall see us drink (sulphur)	- <b>ra</b> PLURAl
b	34	11	ngwiya-dya-wi magura yura- <b>ra</b> diyi	The eoras gave fish to him	- <b>ra</b> PLURAl -∅ ABS [magura-∅]

Table 5 Suffixes in use, marked in bold type, with their function indicated in the right-hand column

## Pronouns



The following table summarises the occurrence of both free and bound pronouns in the Dawes notebooks. It was not possible to identify the complete range.

<b>SINGULAR</b>	<b>Usage key</b>	<b>1st person I, me</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>2nd person you (thou)</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>3rd person he, him she, her</b>	<b>bound</b>
NOMinative —sgNOM	I [saw it] I [fell] you (thou) he, she, it	ngaya, ngayú (I only)	-wu -wi- -yu	ngyini ngyinú (thou alone)	-mi	wugul (?) [b.22.2]	-ban, -band nga /-na (?) ng (?)
ACCusative —sgACC	[she saw] me you (thee) him, her, it	dana	-nga		-nya		-nyi
GENitive —sgGEN	my [... hat] / your (thy) ... / his, her, its ...	danayi		ngyini-ngayi (ne-ne-ni)		nganu- ngayi <sup>a</sup>  daringal	
DATive —sgDAT	[she sent it] to me / to you / to him, her, it	dana / ngaya-da (for me) dana-wa-go- la'ng (for me)	-nma			diyi [b.34.11]	
<b>DUAL</b>	<b>Usage key</b>	<b>1st person we two</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>2nd person you two</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>3rd person they two</b>	<b>bound</b>
NOMinative —duNOM	we two ... / you two ... they two ... saw it	ngaliya [b.28.7; a.7.6.2] ngalu (we 2 only)	-ngun	ngalayi [?]	-ban [error]	yila [b.35.1]	-ila /-ban, /- band
ACCusative —duACC	[she saw] us-two you-two them-two	ngalari	-ngála				
GENitive —duGEN	our (2) ... [hat] ours (2) yours (2) theirs (2)	ngalari-ngayi					
DATive —duDAT	[she sent it ] to us-two to you-two to them-two						
<b>PLURAL</b>	<b>Usage key</b>	<b>1st person we all, us</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>2nd person you all</b>	<b>bound</b>	<b>3rd person they all</b>	<b>bound</b>
NOMinative —plNOM	we-all [saw it] you-all / they-all	<sup>b</sup> ngyila <sup>c</sup> [b.19.18] <sup>d</sup> ngyilu (we 3 only)	-nyi <sup>e</sup>		-nyi [error for we: b.29.9]		-wi
ACCusative —plACC	[she saw] us-all you-all them all	ngyinari	-nina [b.34.7]				
GENITIVE /—plGEN	our (>2) [hat] our (>2) their (>2)	[ngyinari-ngayi] <sup>f</sup>					
DATIVE / —plDAT	She sent it to all of us, you, them						

Table 6 Pronouns identified, with some guessed, in Biyal Biyal

- a. [b.14.10] Dawes gives ‘his or hers’, but more likely ‘someone’s’ or ‘whose’.
- b. *ngyila* assumed to be ‘we two’ by analogy with the other *-a* and *-u* pairs and similarity of form.
- c. [c.21.12] Speaking of a man and his wife: *gniella*—this could be ‘we-two’, ‘you-two’, ‘them-two’, or not even a pronoun.
- d. *Ngýéla tienmíle ngyéla*: Come to play, come [Dawes]—but perhaps the translation is: ‘we-two play, we-two’.
- e. [b.29.9] *biyal nangadyingun, nangadyinyi*: Hence *nangadyíngun* is dual We, and *nangadyínye* is plural We.
- f. Postulated form: no examples in the Dawes or Anon notebooks.

The codes a.40.ii, b.11.10 and the like refer respectively to the notebook concerned, and page and line number, so that anyone can look up these references. Notebooks ‘a’ and ‘b’ were by Dawes, and ‘c’ was the Anon notebook.

In Tables 7-10 and Table 12 below, the columns following the codes are the original language recording, a standardised respelling of them by the writer, and the original translations.

### First person Singular

<b>ngaya: I</b>				<b>1 sg NOM SINGULAR: First person: free pronoun</b>	
a	40	ii	Ngaiyenma (wooroo)	<b>ngaya</b> yan-ma wuru	I go (away)
b	29	12	P to D: Ngia ngirinarabaou-wínia berara	<b>ngaya</b> ngayri-na-ra-ba-wi-nya bira-ra	I will go and fetch you some fish hooks (or the shells)
b	31	12	Ngí’a dturabaou Wáriweárna	<b>ngaya</b> Dura-ba-wu Wariwiya-na	I will kill (lice) for Wariwear
b	3	3.1	Ngía bángabaóu	<b>ngaya</b> banga-ba-wu	I will paddle or row
<b>-wu, -wi: I</b>				<b>1 sg NOM SINGULAR: First person: bound pronoun</b>	
a	1	13	Naabaóu	na-ba- <b>wu</b>	I shall or will see etc.
a	16	13	Bangabaóu	banga-ba- <b>wu</b>	I shall or will paddle
a	35	7	Ngaradióu	ngara-dya- <b>wu</b>	I did hear, think or listen
b	11	10	Kaadianma-dióu	gadayan-ma-dya- <b>wu</b>	I ‘kaadianed’ it (that is, I put the shell on the wómera)
a	40	1	Pýibaouwi dana or Pýibaouwí-nga	bayi-ba- <b>wi</b> dana OR bayi-ba- <b>wi</b> -nga	They will beat me
b	32	6	P.: Nabaoui-ínia Windáyin Tamunadye- mínga	na-ba- <b>wi</b> -nya WINDay-in damuna-dyi-mi- <b>nga</b>	I will look at you through the window (because) you refused me (bread)
c	30	20.2	wea-jowinia	ngwiya-dya- <b>wi</b> -nya	Relating to giving

Table 7 First person singular (I, me) pronouns, free and bound

### First person Dual

<b>-ngun: we two</b>				<b>1 du NOM DUAL: First person: bound pronoun</b>	
a	20	16	Patabángoön	bada-ba- <b>ngun</b>	We [shall or will eat]
b	30	8	Yúdidyíngun yudi Burungà	yudi-dyi- <b>ngun</b> yudi Burung-a	We two are going to see Booroong part of the way home
b	31	9	Nabá <sup>1</sup> bulángun <sup>2</sup> Ngalgear <sup>3</sup> bulanga <sup>4</sup> Tugéarna <sup>5</sup>	na-ba bula- <b>ngun</b> Ngalgiya bula-nga Dugiya-na	We two <sup>2</sup> will go and see <sup>1</sup> or look for <sup>1</sup> Ngalgear <sup>3</sup> and Tugear <sup>5</sup> they two <sup>4</sup>
b	33	18	P.: Manmángun tyíbung wella madwá’ra	man-ma- <b>ngun</b> dyibung willa- ma-dwa’ra	We will gather tyíbungs as we come back

<b>-nyi (-nya?): we all</b>				<b>1 pl NOM PLURAL: First person: bound pronoun</b>	
b	12	13	Yenmánye kaouwi [sp.?] kamarabú	yan-ma- <b>nyi</b> ga-wi gamara- bu	We will return the same day [1 pl JS?]
b	29	8	Bial Nangadyi-ngun; Nangadyínye	biyal nanga-dyi-ngun, nanga-dyi- <b>nyi</b>	Hence Nangadyingun is dual We, & Nangadyínye is Plural We [1 pl JS?]
c	4	11	Yenmannia	yan-ma- <b>nyi</b> [?]	Shall or will go [We-all will go JS?]
c	29	9	Cot-bannie	gudba- <b>nyi</b>	Cut [We-all shall cut: 1 pl or Cut you sg JS?]
c	29	14	Vuida-i-dinia	widayi-dyi- <b>nyi</b> [widayi-di- <b>nya?</b> ]	Related to drinking [We-all drank JS?]
c	29	17	Yennarabanie yennool	ya-na-ra-ba- <b>nyi</b> yanul	Related to walking [We-all will walk JS?]
c	29	18	Yenmania	yan-ma- <b>nya</b>	Ditto [related to walking] at a future time [We-all will walk JS?]

Table 8 First person dual (we-two, us-two), and plural (we-all, us-all) bound pronouns.

Dawes was uncertain about *-nie* (*-nyi*) and first classed it as you plural. This was before he was aware of the dual/plural distinction. Then in the example b.29.8 he discovered that *-nyi* meant ‘plural we’: 1 pl NOM. The writer, ‘JS’, has indicated some uncertainties. The records are incomplete leaving much open to speculation, or simply unknown.

### Second person Singular

<b>ngyini: you (thou)</b>				<b>2 sg NOM SINGULAR: Second person: free pronoun</b>	
b	22	18	Ngieni waúnia	<b>ngyini</b> wanya	You lie
b	23	9	Yoóroo. Ngiéenee goóla yoóroo	yuru. <b>ngyini</b> gula yuru	Hungry. Are you hungry?
b	32	16	D.: Mínyin ngyínibial piabúni whiteman	minyín <b>ngyini</b> biyal baya-buni WHITEMAN?	Why don’t you (learn to) speak like a whiteman?
b	5	5.3	Ngieéenee dtoóradiémi	<b>ngyini</b> Dura-dyi-mi	Thou pinchedst

Table 9 Second person singular (thou, thee [for *you*]) free pronoun

### Second person Plural

<b>ngyila: you all</b>				<b>2 pl NOM PLURAL: Second person: free pronoun</b>	
b	19	18	Ngyéla tienmíle ngyéla	<b>ngyila</b> dyan-mi-li <b>ngyila</b>	Come to play, come

Table 10 Second person plural (you-all) free pronoun [See also note d, Table 6]

*dyan-* words (second-last column, Table 10) could mean ‘laugh’ as a noun; and with the verbaliser *-mi* added could mean ‘play’.

### Who, someone

NOMinative	ngana, ngan	who
ACCusative		whom
GENitive/POSSessive	nganu-ngayi	whose
DATive	ngana-ma, ngana-wa	to whom

Table 11 Interrogative and relative free pronoun (who)

### Third person Plural

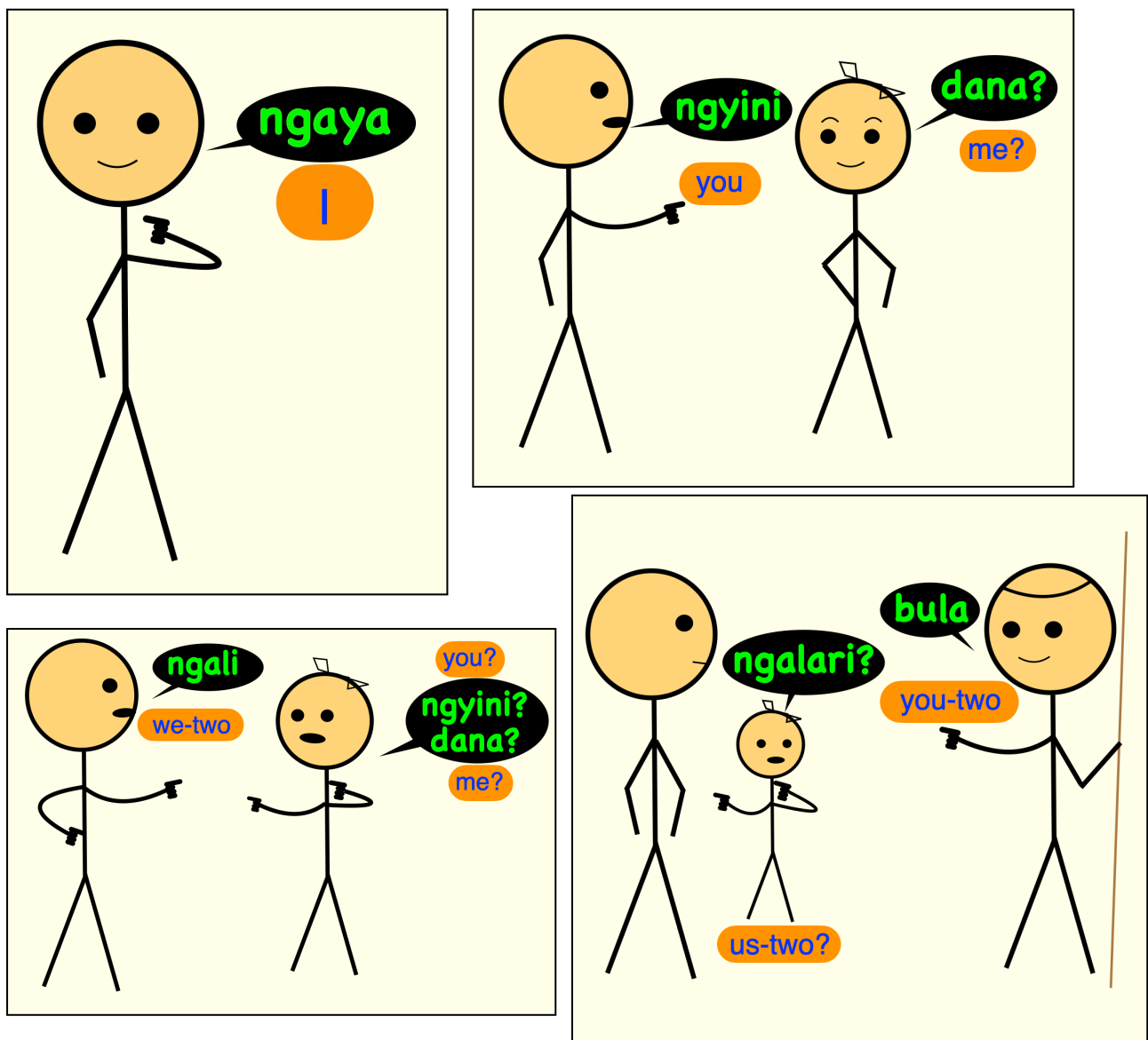
<b>-wi: they all</b>				<b>3 pl NOM PLURAL: Third person: bound pronoun</b>	
a	16	18	Bangabaóui	banga-ba- <b>wi</b>	They [will paddle]
b	34	12	Ngwiadyaoúwi magöra eorāra dyi	ngwiya-dya- <b>wi</b> magura yura-ra dyi	The eoras gave fish to him
b	35	3	Brúwi karadyuwi ngábüing	Buruwi gara-dyu- <b>wi</b> ngabang	(All) three have large breasts— that is: They are all three women grown

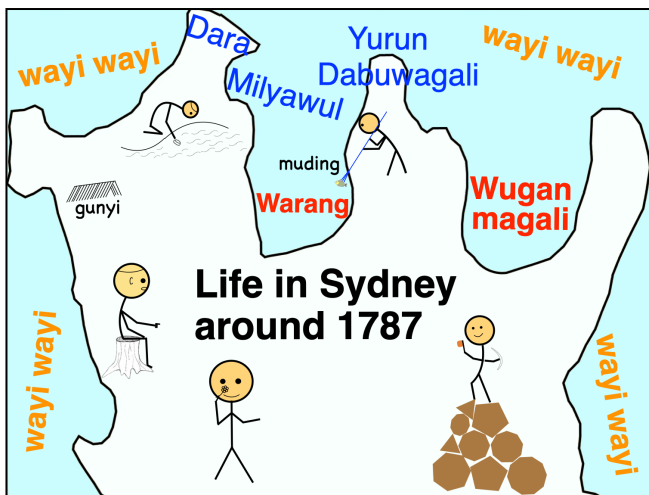
Table 12 Third person plural (they-all) bound pronoun

### Language cartoons

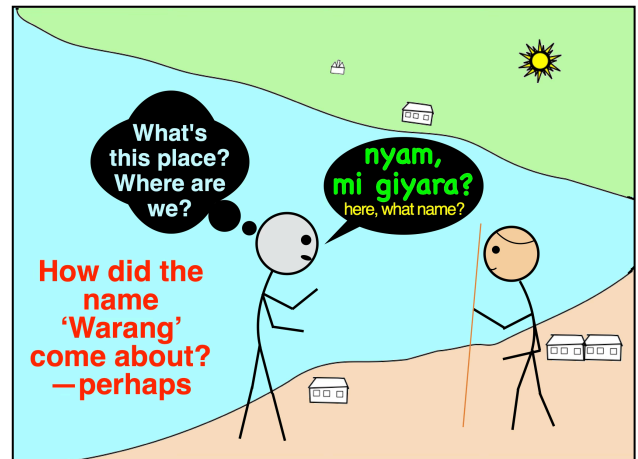
The thirty or so illustrations in the following pages were taken from around a hundred presentations about the Sydney language at the time of the First Fleet's arrival made by the writer, from his analysis of Dawes' notebooks, by invitation to a handful of members of the Redfern Aboriginal community between 2014 and 2019. The stick-figure cartoons were devised by a non-artist to explain aspects of language, and specifically Biyal Biyal, the Sydney language.

## Pronouns





## Name of Sydney



## Welcome to country

Welcome to country  
guwi ngura-gu

diyi ngura WanGal-ngayi

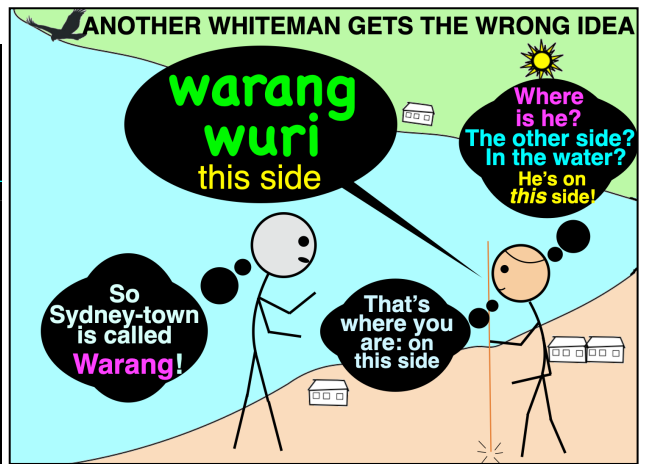
This is the place of the people of Wann

baya-ba-wi ngyini ngyini  
mayal yagu

They say you and you are a stranger today

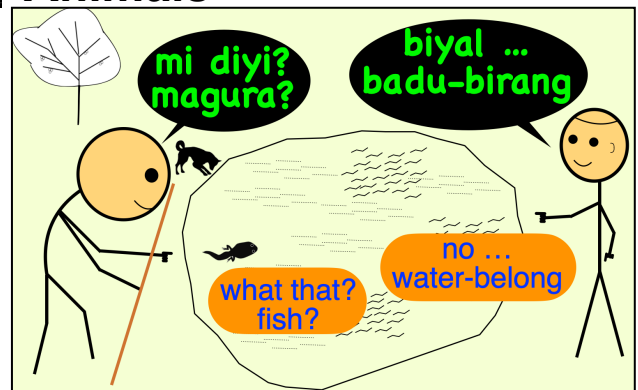
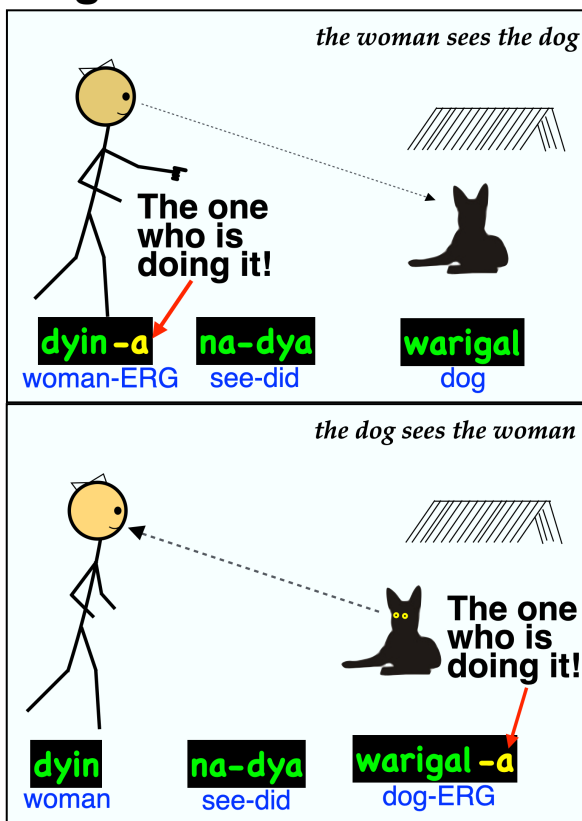
mayal biyal mulnawul

But not stranger tomorrow



## Animals

### Ergative



## What does 'with' mean ?

we cut the wood **with** a hatchet  
 I went **with** Milba  
 he was the man **with** a fishing spear  
 I will speak **with** you  
 the dog was sitting **with** the children  
 I left my spear **with** the boy



**gudbara-dya-ngun wadi mugu-da**  
 cut- did- we-two stick hatchet-using  
 we cut the stick **with** a hatchet

**mala-da**  
**gudbara-**  
**dya wadi**

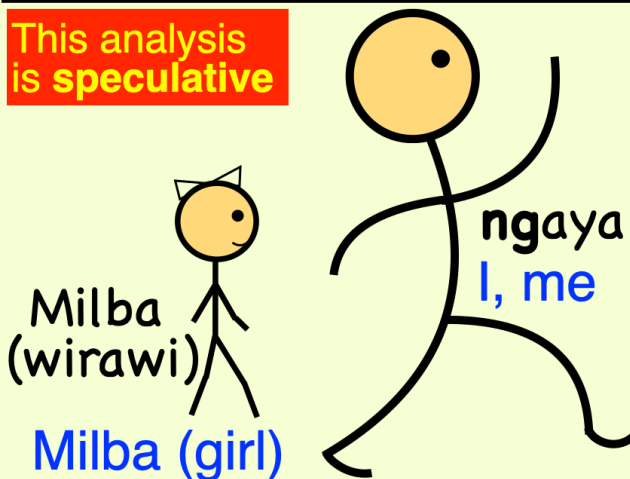
man-ERG  
 cut-did stick

This analysis  
 is speculative



**yan-ya-wu Milba-wi**  
 go did I Milba with  
 I went **with** Milba

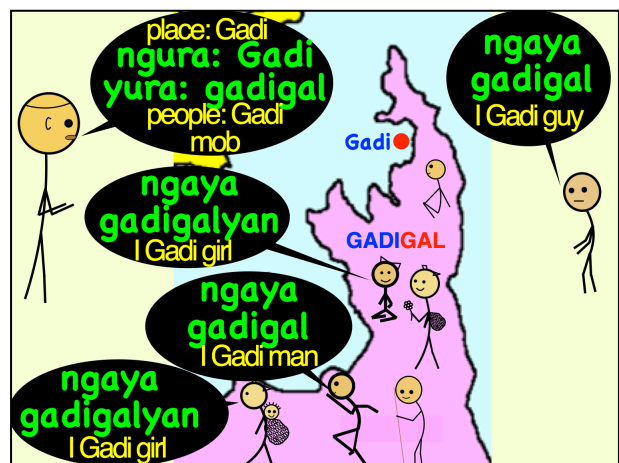
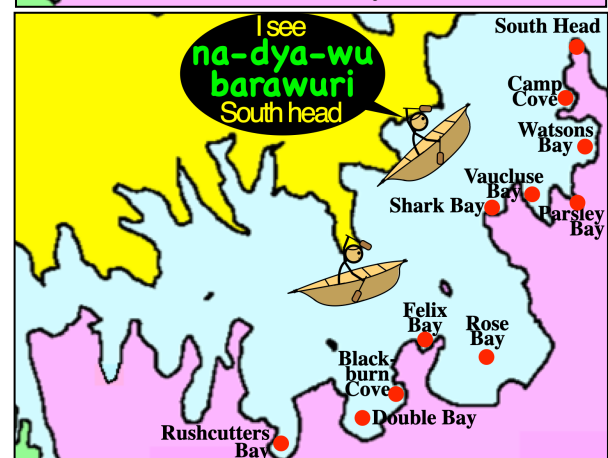
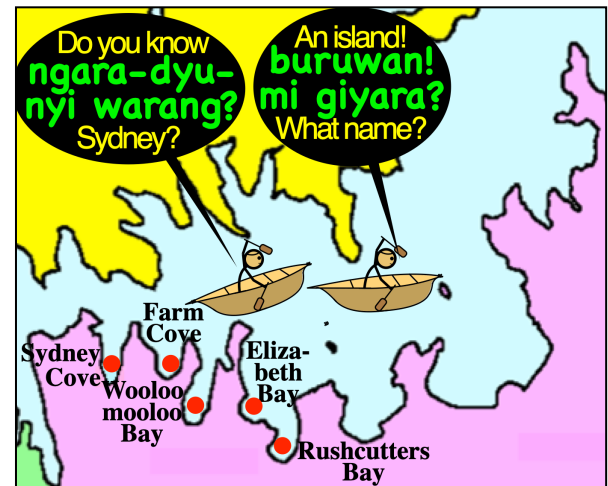
This analysis  
 is speculative

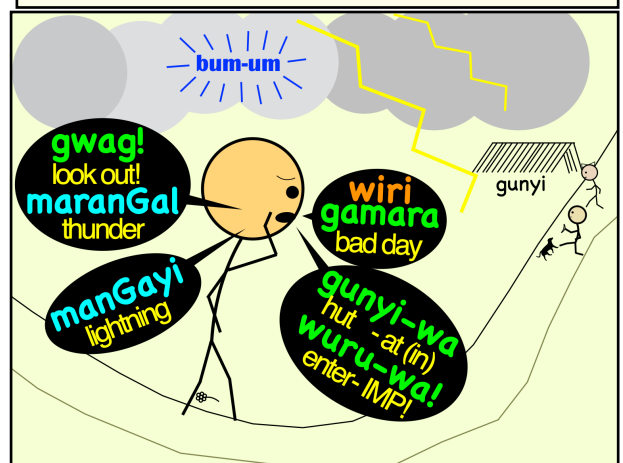
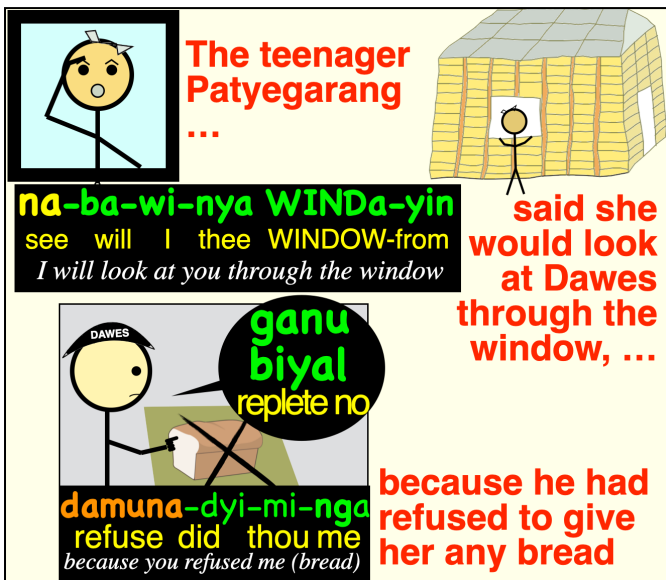
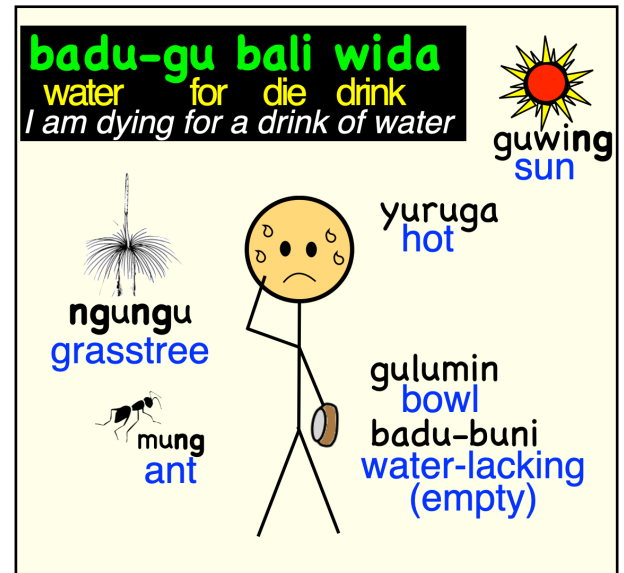
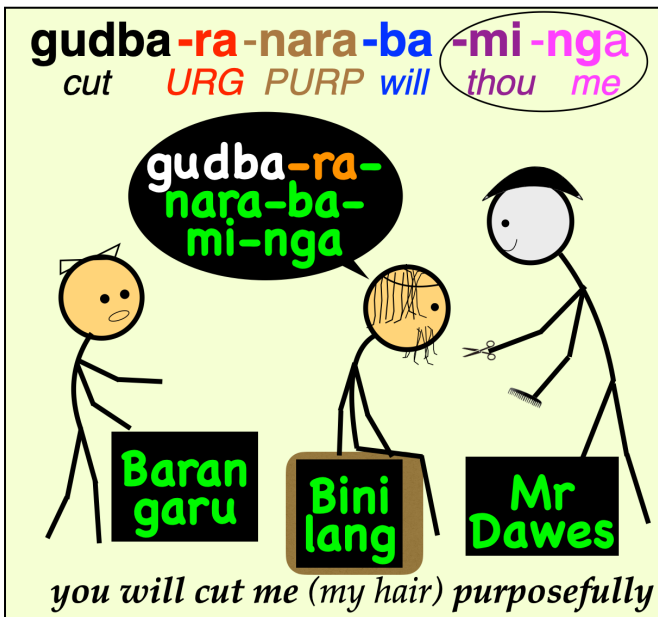


## Exclamation

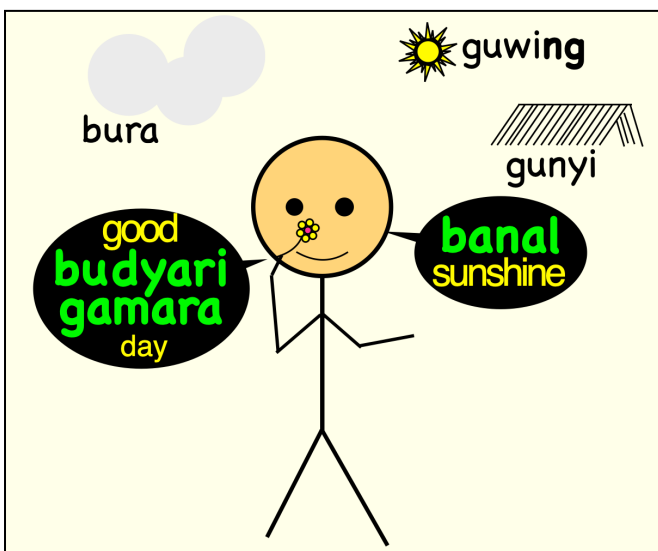


## On the harbour

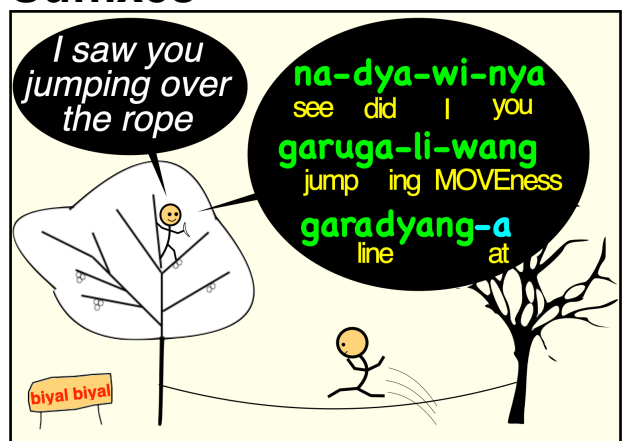




## Weather



## Suffixes



## -gan: agent

**ngulu-gan** forehead-agent

forehead

**ngulu**

**ngulugan**

**binyi-gan** belly-agent

bindi: belly

bindi mari: belly big

**gawal-gan** big-agent

ngaya gawal-galyang

I elder sister

barinmuni

barin-lacking

ngaya narang

I little

**garadi-gan** doctor-agent

extracts the illness

**garadyi**

**badyal mani** ill, sick

1

**ngaya budyari yagu**

Look! Stone

**nala giba**

I well now

2

-gan: someone who does something: 'agent'

**damili-gan** name-swap —agent

**diyi ngana ngana**

**damili-ba-ngun?**

shall we exchange names?

**ngana ngana**

this fellow is ngana ngana

COLLINS

**damili-gan** name-swap —agent

**yagu giyara danayi Collins!**

**damili** name-swap

now my name 'Collins'

**COLLINS**

## Special suffix

**mari big**

**ganga-li-ba-mi** wash ing will thou

**ngyini** thou

**dyira-wa-gulang** white move towards

big wash-ing yourself you white become

If you scrub yourself thoroughly you will become white

I'll get to be white by the day after tomorrow!

**dyira-white**

**bara-bu-wari** day-after-tomorrow

**ya-wu** will I

white day-after-tomorrow will I

DAWES

## Some useful words from the notebooks

babana	brother
bada	to eat
bada-garang	red kangaroo
badang	rock oyster
badu	water
badyal	to be hurt, ill
bagarayi	swamp wallaby
bana	rain
banarung	blood
banga	to do, make, paddle
barani	yesterday
barbaga	to lose
baribugu	tomorrow
barin	loincloth
bayi	to hit, beat
bayi	to speak
bimul	earth
bira	fish-hook, shell
birang	belonging
biraya	to sing
biyal	no
biyana	father
bugi	bathe, swim
bula	two
-buni	negative
buruwang	island, ship
buruwi	three
da-banga	to yawn
dagara	cold
damilayi	to exchange names
Dirumin	sister
didyiri-guru	enough
dirumu	tree(s)
diyi	this
dunga	to cry
dyin	woman
dyingu	dog
dyira	white
gabara	head
-gal	men of a clan, group
-galyang	women of a clan, group
gamaru	day
ganalang	heat
ganga	wash
-gangi	emphasis

garaga	mouth
garawayi	white
garibari	dance style
giba	stone, rock
giyara	name
gudbara	to cut [Eng. ?]
-gulang	for (purpose)
gulara	angry
gumiri	hole
guni	to smell
gunyi	hut
guri	more
guwing	sun
guwi	to call, cooee
gwagu	soon
gwara	wind
gwiyang	fire
man	to take, find
man-wari	to take away
mayi	eye
malung	dark
	start, frightened, jump
manya	
marayang	emu
mari	big, very
mari-dulu	four, many
minyin	why
mirana	to go first
mirang	belonging
muding	fish-gig
mula	man
mulnawul	tomorrow
-muni	negative
na (nga)	to see
na-muru	compass
nabang	breast
nanga	to sleep
narang	small, little
nawi	canoe
ngalawa	sit, stay
ngan	what
ngara	to hear, know, understand
ngaya	I
ngayiri	to bring, carry, fetch
ngwiyi	to give, put
ngyini	you (thou)
wadi	wood, stick
wagan	crow

wagul	one
walama	to return
walan	rain, it rains
walanga	to follow, be second
walu	chin
wami	to scold
wana	not want
wanya	to lie, fib
wara	away
wara wara	just now
waranga	when
wari	away
warigal	dog
warim	where
waringa	soon
waya(na)	
wiya(na)	mother
wida	to drink
wi-ngara	to think
wirawi	child (f)
wiri	bad
wumara	fly, run (animal)
wungara	child (m)
yagu(na)	today
yan	to go
yanada	moon
yini	to fall
yiri	to throw
yirung	tree, a
yura	Aboriginal
yuru	hungry, angry
yuwin	indeed, true, yes

### Tourist's Guide

This simple presentation of the Sydney language is indebted to the work of William Dawes and other compilers of word lists among his contemporaries, as well as to later professional scholars including Jakelin Troy, *The Sydney Language*, Canberra, 1994, and R.M.W. Dixon, *The Languages of Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

*Dawes:*    **Mínyin**<sup>1</sup>    **ngyíni**<sup>2</sup>    **bial**<sup>3</sup>    **piabúni**<sup>4</sup>    **whiteman**  
                  *mínyin*            *ngyíni*            *biyal*            *baya-búni*    *WHITEMAN?*

Why<sup>1</sup> don't<sup>3</sup> you<sup>2</sup> (learn to) speak<sup>4</sup> like a whiteman?

*Patyegorang:*            **Wiangabunínga**    **bial**  
    *ngwiya-nga-buní-nga*    *biyal*

Not understanding this answer I asked her to explain,  
 which she did very clearly, by giving me to understand it was because I gave her  
 victuals, drink and every thing she wanted,  
 without putting her to the trouble of asking for it.

I then told her that a whiteman had been wounded some days ago in coming from Kadi  
 to W̃arang [Sydney Cove] and asked her why the blackmen did it.

Answer:    **Gulara**<sup>1</sup>  
                                  *gulara*

(Because they are) angry<sup>1</sup>

*Dawes:*            **Mínyin**<sup>1</sup>            **gulara**<sup>2</sup>            **eora**<sup>3?</sup>  
                          *mínyin*                    *gulara*                    *yúra?*

Why are<sup>1</sup> the black men<sup>3</sup> angry<sup>2?</sup>

*Patye.:*    **Inyám**    **ngalaowi**    white men  
                  *inyám*            *ngalawayi*    *WHITE MEN*

[Inyám=here; ngalaowi=they sat]

Because the white men are settled here

*Patye.:*            **Tyérun**<sup>1</sup>    **kamarigál**<sup>2</sup>  
                          *dyirun*                    *Gamari-gál*

The kamarigals<sup>2</sup> are afraid<sup>1</sup>

*Dawes:*            **Mínyin**    **tyérun**    **kamarigál?**  
                          *mínyin*            *dyirun*            *Gamari-gál?*

Why are the kamarigals afraid?

*Patye.:*            **Gúnin**<sup>1</sup>  
                          *GUN-in*

Because of the guns<sup>1</sup>

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 and Anon notebooks  
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