

*Yimarne* in Kunbarlang:  
from simulative to quotative

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# Outline

- 1. Kunbarlang
- 2. Yimarne:
  - range of functions: similative, counterfactual and complementizing uses
  - hypothetical development
- 3. Conclusions

# Kunbarlang

- Gunbalang, Gunbarlang, Warlang, ISO639-3:wlg
- Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
- approx. 30+ speakers, mainly in Warruwi and Maningrida, adults
- non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan family
- underdescribed;  
unpublished work by J.K. Harris (60's) and C. Coleman (80's)

# Kunbarlang on the map



# Kunbarlang: typological profile

- polysynthetic (agglutination & fusion)
- one/two arguments cross-referenced in the verb; incorporation; valency-changing derivations
- unrestricted pro-drop (every well-formed verb is a well-formed clause)
- discourse-configurational with SVO neutral
- relatively poor nominal morphology
- noun class system with four classes

# Kunbarlang: data collection

- most data come from Vanya Kapitonov's fieldwork at Waruwi and in Darwin in 2015–2018
- additional data are from recordings made by Isabel O'Keeffe and Ruth Singer, as well as Carolyn Coleman's unpublished grammar
- the data are archived (or will be in the near future) with PARADISEC and ELAR, contact the authors for access

## 2. The particle *yimarne*

- similative  
'(it looks) like ... NP' > '(it looks) like ... clause'
- counterfactuals  
'... but not'
- near-quotative complementizing uses  
'He thought like...'

# Similative

- (1) Yimarnek            kuyunu  
Y                        cloud/sky  
'blue' [lit. 'like cloud/sky']            (IK1-160728\_001-01)
- (2) ngal-buk            yimarne            durduk  
II-person            Y                        dog  
'she (looks like) a dog'            (Coleman 1982:65)
- (3) yimarne            kadda-rdukkumung  
Y                        3PL.NF-cut.PST  
'(it looks) like/as if they cut it'            (IK1-170610\_2SM-01)



# Counterfactuals

## Counterfactual conditional

- (4) ngudda benbe yimarne ki-nganj-kangkayini ngayi  
you yesterday Y 2SG.IRR.PST-HITH-go.IRR.PST I  
  
ngay-ngun-wuni bilmu ki-djarri.  
1SG.IRR.PST-2SG.OBJ-give.IRR.PST barramundi 2SG.IRR.PST-eat.IRR.PST

'If you came yesterday, I would have given you barramundi to eat.'  
(IK1-170609\_1SY-02)

# Counterfactuals

## Attempts

- (5) yimarne ki-ngan-buni karra kodjkodj,  
Y 3SG.IRR.PST-1SG.OBJ-hit.IRR.PST on head  
karlu, nga-yalbirdakdjung  
no 1SG.NF-sprint.PST  
'He tried to hit me on the head, but no, I ran away.' (IK1-170626\_1PN-01)

## Unrealized volitions

- (6) nga-mabuluy yimarne ki-kangkayini barbung  
1SG.NF-want.PST Y 3SG.IRR.PST-go.IRR.PST fish  
la ka-ngunda karlu ngurnda ngarra-mabulu  
and 3SG.NF-act.PST no not 1SG.IRR.PST-want.IRR.NP  
'I wanted him to go fishing, but he said no I dont want to.' (IK1-170615\_1SY-02)

# Counterfactuals

## ‘Mistaken belief’

- (7) yimarne kadda-ngunda=barr nabareng, but nukka ngorro karlu.  
Y 3PL.NF-think.PST dangerous but he DEM not  
‘They thought he was dangerous but he was not.’ (IK-160624\_000-01)

# Near-quotative

## Accord clauses

- (9) Yimarne ngarrk-ngundje Nangarridj kurnungu yalbi Kuwarnda  
Y 1INCL.NF-act.NP Nangarridj his country Kuwarnda  
'Like we say, it's Nangarridj's country, Kuwarnda.' (20150413IOv01)

## Reported Thought

- (10) Kikka ka-ngunda [yimarne [lemon namanwarri]].  
she 3SG.NF-act.PST Y lemon sour  
'She finds [lit. 'said'] lemon sour.' (IK1-170616\_1SY)

# Grouping of the observed uses

- there are three main types of combinations with *yimarne*:
  - with nominals (similatives)
  - with full clauses (the counterfactual family of uses)
  - with full clauses as an argument of a propositional attitude verb (near-quotative / complementizing uses)

# Diachronic path

- no diachronic data to track the development
- based on the other attested scenarios, we venture the following path of function extension:  
similative > counterfactual > complementizing
- this is further supported by comparative data: in Bininj kun-wok, there is a cognate particle with the first two functions, but not the last (Evans 2003)

# Basis of extension: step one

we analyze the common semantic core that enables this development as a notion of **similarity** along some dimension (e.g., perceptual) or **approximation** (again, in some relevant respect, s.a. perceptual, event phase, etc.)

while the core meaning is similarity, the additional component of non-identity can be seen to originate in a Gricean implicature: what is similar is not identical

first, the domain of Y metaphorically extends

- from perceptual aspects of concrete objects e.g. she looks like a dog  
[Yimarne [nominal]]
- to the more abstract domain of events e.g. looks like there's only us two (sim)  
like he would hit me on the head (appr)  
[Yimarne [clause]]

# Basis of extension: step two

then, its combinability with clauses extends to uses in clause complexes:

- antecedent of a counterfactual conditional, e.g. (like)/if you came yesterday, I..  
 $Y [CP] \rightarrow [[Y [CP]], CP]$
- and under complement-taking verbs (propositional attitude predicates),  
e.g. he thought (like) you had a dog  
 $Y [CP] \rightarrow V [Y [CP]]$



# Combinability with matrix predicates

The ‘approximation’ idea is central to the meaning of *yimarne*: determines which matrix predicates it can combine with

OK with range of reporting predicates:

- Reported speech/thought -*ngundje* (say/think/act), -*burrdjuwa* (tell)
- Reported volition/intention -*mabulunj* (want)

Out with ‘factive-emotive’ predicates: -*mak* ‘good, glad’, -*warri* ‘bad’

(11) \**kun-mak yimarne ki-nganj-kidanj*

\*cl4-good Y                    2SG-hither-come.PST

‘\*it’s good that(yimarne) you came’

# Conclusions 1

Broader typology:

- aptitude for **similatives** to develop complementizer and quotative uses (and conditional and accord clause uses) is well-attested (Güldemann 2008, Heine & Kuteva 2004: 257, Treis & Vanhove 2017)
- but the semantic specialization for **counterfactual** and **non-factive** complement uses seems to mainly be described for Australian languages e.g. McGregor 1994; Evans 1995, 2003; Spronck 2015

# Conclusions 2

Broader typology:

- counterfactual uses: ‘multiple-perspective’ construction
  - ◁ (at first) it came across as similar to...
  - ▷ (but now) it is known not to have been so
- reported perception to which an interpretation (mistaken) is added by the current speaker (cf. McGregor 1994)

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