

Numbers and what they mean

Remarks made during the Maths as a Cultural Practice Workshop, CDU, 2007¹

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<p>Before <i>ɲarra dhu</i> losing, <i>moma ɲarra dhu</i>, <i>balanya idea ɲarraku bitjan</i>, <i>balanya gam'</i>: ga correct me if I'm wrong, <i>bili bawalamirri nhakun nhuma dhu nhawi bitjan</i>, <i>ɲarra djäl correctiongu dhuwal</i>, <i>yän nhakun going back to nhanju Gutjan'ku question</i>, <i>yän nhakun bothurruw ɲayi ga try find out nhakun limurr dhuwal ga waɲanhamirri ga findout</i>.</p>	<p>Just before I forget what I was going to say, I have an idea that's like this, so, correct me if I'm wrong, because you might be (thinking about) something entirely different, so I want to be corrected, but just going back to Lanybalanyba's question about counting, she was trying to find out about what it is that we are discussing here and finding out.</p>
<p><i>balanya nhakun</i> when a <i>balanda</i> says 'Our candidate has 45%', <i>ya' ɲunhi</i>, is there 45% <i>napurrungal yolɲuwal</i>? How do you work that out? In <i>Yolɲukurrdja yaka rra marɲgi</i>, <i>mak lurrkun' bäy</i>, <i>mak lurrkun' bäy</i>, <i>mak lurrkun'</i>, <i>yurr lurrkun'</i> can be 3, <i>ya' nhakun</i>. <i>Yän muka idea nhakun going back to nhanju question</i>, and this is the thing that <i>napurr ga barpuru</i> asking question when we came here.</p>	<p>For example when a <i>balanda</i> says 'Our candidate has 45%', like that, is there such a thing as 45% for us <i>Yolɲu</i>? How would we work that out? In <i>Yolɲu</i> language I don't know, maybe we would say <i>lurrkun'</i> but <i>lurrkun'</i> can also be used to mean 3, you see. It's only an idea going back to her question, and it's the question we were asking yesterday when we arrived in Darwin (before the workshop).</p>
<p><i>Ya' bitjan nhakun lurrkun</i>, <i>lurrkun nhakun</i> is it a percentage or <i>nhä</i>? <i>Nhakun ɲunhi yalala nhuma dhu ɲarrany nhawi gunga'yun</i>, <i>balanya nhakun limurr ɲuli bitjan nhäma gam'</i>:</p>	<p>So that word <i>lurrkun'</i>, is <i>lurrkun'</i> a percentage or what is it? That's what you are going to have the help me with, for example we see it like this:</p>
<p><i>ɲunhi napurr ga talking about shapes and sizes mala nhakun</i>, <i>balanya nhakun outside napurr ga talking about</i>, <i>balanya nhakun nhä muka bambay</i>?</p>	<p>We were talking about different shapes and sizes, outside (having tea) we were talking about – what was it 'blind-one'? (ie sister)</p>
<p>WG: <i>Nhä ɲunhi nhe</i>? F: <i>Dhuɲa ɲarra</i>, <i>yän nhakun ɲunhi say warraga</i>, <i>walal ɲuli lakaram yony-</i></p>	<p>Waymamba: What was it? F: I don't know, but just talking about <i>cycad (ceremonial bread)</i> they used</p>

¹ See www.cdu.edu.au/centres/yaci/projects_math.html

barrtjun ya' balanya nhakun, like there
might be a word in English mak ya' nunhi,
WG nãthil walal gan baman' use that word
yony-barrtjun nathaw mala
dilkurruwurruy
F: Yow balanya nhakun

the word yony-barrtjun (to talk about
division and shapes) you see, so there
might be a word in English for that,
Waymamba: long ago a word the old
people used was yony-barrtjun
F: Yes, you see.

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