LESSON 12

Doer.to/Actor and instrument

This lesson introduces the instrumental use of Ergative case, *nguru* – Ergative ‘she, he, it’, and the Ergative question pronoun, *ngaandu*.

In Lesson 11 you saw the common form of the Ergative suffix on standard nouns and adjectives, but by now you will realise some other words such as pronouns do not have a suffix, just a special form.

Vocabulary

Play audio: GGU 12.1.mp3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garay</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>gimubila</em></td>
<td>do/make! tr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nguru</em></td>
<td>she, he, it (Ergative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>minyadhu?</em></td>
<td>what with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ngaandu?</em></td>
<td>who did it? (Ergative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nhaayba</td>
<td>knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>magal</em></td>
<td>knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gula</td>
<td>fork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wirri</td>
<td>plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbiyarral</td>
<td>spoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbulu</td>
<td>stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mungin</td>
<td>mosquito</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*There are some English words, including ‘make’, that are particularly problematic to translate. You can use *gimubili* for creating something, but often other words would likely have been used. A few examples: ‘cook’ for ‘make’ a meal, ‘cut’ for make a boomerang, *burranba-li* for ‘making happy/sad’.

*Nguru* is doer.to/Ergative ‘she/he/it’, so is used to translate those words when they are the doer.to, the subject of a transitive verb. For example in:

_Man.garr nguru dhiyamay._
The child ate the meat.

Like other subject and object pronouns it is predominantly in second position in the sentence or clause.

*Magal* is a traditional word for knife and *nhaayba* is an adaptation of the English ‘knife’. Some may prefer to use *magal* even if *nhaayba* has been used recently.

**Grammar**

* **Instrumental function of Ergative case**

You have seen how the Ergative suffix can show who or what is the doer.to, as in:

_Birralii_dhu dhingga dhay._
The child ate the meat.

The same suffix is used to show an instrument, something that is used to do something. For example:

_Birralii-dhu dhingga dhay, magal-u, gula-gu._
The child ate the meat **with a knife and fork**.

_Dhiyamay ngaya wiyayl, mara-gu._
I picked up the pen **with my hand**.

It is generally easy to distinguish the two functions of the suffix.
Lesson 12. Doer.to/Actor and Instrument

A doer.to (also known as agent) is generally **animate** – a living thing.

Instruments are usually **inanimate** – non-living. The ‘instrument’ is also often after the verb, at the end of the sentence, whereas the doer.to is more often before the verb. The most common word order is:

Doer.to done.to verb; often with other words such as *giirr* (first word) and demonstratives.

Instruments are more commonly found in sentences with transitive verbs but are found with intransitive verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bumay ngaya dhawun, dhulu-gu.</th>
<th>transitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I hit the ground with a stick.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yananhi ngaya dhulu-gu.</th>
<th>intransitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I walked with (using) a stick.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ergative suffix is used to translate ‘with’ when it means something is an instrument. It does not translate ‘with’ in other circumstances; for instance, ‘I walked home with my sister’. ‘I walked with a stick (on my shoulder)’. You will learn how to say that later.

Note a special form of the Ergative suffix on *minya*? ‘what?’. *Minyadhu* means ‘what with?’ ‘using what?’ and ‘what?(doer.to)’.

In the next sentences *minyadhu* refers to an **instrument**, it has **instrumental** function:

*Minyadhu nginda dhuru bumay?*
What did you hit/kill the snake with?

*Dhulugu ngaya dhuru bumay.*
I hit/killed the snake with the stick.

*Minyadhu=nda dhinggaa dhiyamay?*
What did you pick up the meat with?

*Maragu.*
With my hand.

In the next sentence, *minyadhu* refers to a **doer.to**, it has **ergative** function:

*Minyadhu buruma yiiy?*
What bit the dog?
Some more examples:

_Dhuru bumala dhulu-gu._
Hit the snake with the stick.

_Garriya mara-gu yuul dhamala._
Don't touch the food with your hand.

_Gii=ngai ngaya bumay, buruma, bundi-dhu._
I hit the dog with a bundi/club.

(This example has a general term =ngai ‘it’, then the specific buruma. This pattern is relatively common in Aboriginal languages.)

_Birraydu buruma bumay, barran-du._
The boy hit the dog with a boomerang.

_Dhiyamala dhingga gula-gu._
Pick up the meat with the fork.

_Dhiyamala dhingga gula-gu, gamilbala maragu._
Pick up the meat with the fork, not with your hand.

_Gii= ngai yananhi dhulugu._
Grandad walked with a stick.

_Yaama dhlaadhaa giidjaay bumay, dhulugu burlu-u?_
Did granddad hit/kill the ant with a big stick?

**Nguru**

_Nguru_ is the doer.to/Ergative form of ‘she/he/it’.

**Reminder:** When using verbs you need to start by knowing if the verb is transitive or intransitive.

If intransitive the only thing necessarily involved is the _doer_, which is in Nominative case.

If the verb is intransitive there is a _doer.to/Ergative case and often a done.to/Accusative case._
The examples below show that the doer/Nominative and done.to/Accusative forms are the same for third person pronouns. The doer.to/Ergative is different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>She ran.</th>
<th>Intransitive verb</th>
<th>so ‘she’ is =NHa, Ø, or nhama.</th>
<th>doer/Nominative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banaganhinba. Or Banaganhi. Or, less commonly, Banaganhi nhama.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw her.</td>
<td>Transitive verb</td>
<td>so ‘she’ is =NHa, Ø, or nhama.</td>
<td>done.to/Accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngamiynba ngaya. Or Ngamiy ngaya. Or, less commonly, Ngamiy ngaya nbama.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For third person pronouns like ‘he/she/it’ the doer.to/Ergative is different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>She saw the car.</th>
<th>Transitive verb, doer.to/Ergative, so ‘she’ is nguru.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngamiy nguru wilbaarr. Or Wilbaarr nguru ngamiy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ngaandi / ngaandu ‘who, whom’

Note also another GY pronoun that translates ‘Who?’

Ngaandi is used when the verb is intransitive (doer), and ngaandu when the verb is transitive, and the question is about the doer.to. Ngaandi is also used for the done.to with a transitive verb.

Another way of putting this is that ngaandi is Nominative and Accusative case, ngaandu is Ergative case.

You may need to check this section a few times as this can be a difficult concept.

Who? (doer and done.to) ngaandi? For instance:

Ngaandi dhaay dhurray? (Intransitive verb, doer)
Who came here?

Ngaandi nginda ngamiy.
Who(m) did you see?
Who?  (doer.to)  ngaandu?  For instance:

Ngaandu dhinggaa dhay?
Who ate the meat?

Further examples:

Ngaandi yananhi?
Who walked?

Ngaandi banaganhi?
Who ran?

Ngaandi baabiy?
Who slept?

Ngaandu buruma bumay?
Who hit the dog?

Ngaandi burumagu yiiy?
Who did the dog bite?

Ngaandi nginda ngamiy? (Transitive verb, done.to)
Who/wom did you(1) see?

Ngaandu buruma yiiy?
Who bit the dog?

Ngaandu cake wiya-nhi?
Who made the cake? (cooked)

Ngaandi yananhi gundhi-gu?
Who walked to the house? (using the -gu ‘to’ suffix)

Another way to describe the pattern is:

Ngaandi is not a first and second person pronoun, so the form of the doer (Nominative) and the done.to (Accusative) is the same. The doer.to (Ergative) is ngaandu, ending in u as most Ergatives do.
Practice

**Play audio: GGU 12.5.mp3**

This is a good chance to revise vocabulary. Establish a pattern, then change just one thing.

*Dhama-li ngaya wirri gula-gu.*
I will touch the plate with a fork.

*Dhama-li ngaya wirri mara-gu.*
I will touch the plate with my hand.

*Dhama-li ngaya wirri wiyayl-u.*
I will touch the plate with a pen.

Then change more elements: the verb, the done.to, and so on.

*Dhama-y=nha ngaya gula-gu.*
I touched it with a fork.

**Play audio: GGU 12.6.mp3**

**In pairs/groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A:</th>
<th>Buma-la man.ga maragu.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hit the table with your hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B:</th>
<th>Bumali ngaya man.ga maragu.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will hit the table with my hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C to A:</td>
<td>Did you see? B hit the table with their hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A to C:</td>
<td>Yes, I saw. She hit the table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions

Minyadhu ngaya biiba dhiyamali?
What will I pick up the paper with?

A: Magalu nginda dhinggaa garray?
Did you cut the meat with a knife?
B: Yawu, magalu ngaya banggabaagu dhinggaa garray.
Yep, I cut the meat with the white knife.

Winangala, garay guwaala, yawala.
Listen, say and read.

It may help to first revise the $L$ class verbs forms in the Lesson 11 table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dhiyama-la!</td>
<td>dhiyama-li</td>
<td>dhiyama-y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Play audio: GGU 12.7.mp3

Minya nguru gimubi?
What did he/she do/make?

Biiba garray yinarru nhaaybagu.
The woman cut the paper with a knife.
(paper cut-PAST Woman-ERG knife-INST)

Ngaandu dhinggaa dhay?
Who ate the meat?

Ngaandi nginda ngamiy?
Who/whom did you see?

Ngaandi yinarru winangay?
Who did the woman hear?

Ngaandi burumadhi banaganhi?
Who ran away from the dog?
Lesson 12. Doer, To/Actor and Instrument

Play audio: GGU 12.8.mp3

Minyadhu nginda gaala bumay?
What did you hit the cup with?

Minyadhu giwiirru gaala bumay?
What did the man hit the cup with?

Minya gimubiy giwiirru?
What did the man do? (to something)

(The Gamilaraay here feels like English, but I do not know a better way to say this. In Pitjantjatjara there is a verb ‘do what?’, based on nyaa? ‘what?’. It might be better to use a pattern found in another Aboriginal language rather than use an English pattern. The next sentence does that, using minyaba-li ‘do.what?’, transitive.)

Minyabay giwiirru?
What did the man do? (to something)

Biiba ngaya garray nhaaybagu.
I cut the paper with the knife.

Buruma giwiirru bumay bundidhu.
The man hit the dog with a bundi.

Yaama dhimba Maridhu bumay?
Did the Murri hit the sheep?

Yaama bundidhu Maridhu bumay dhimba?
Did the Murri hit the sheep with a bundi?

Yaama bundidhu Maridhu dhimba bumay?
Was it a stick that the man hit the sheep with?

You might like to speak and act out the following:

Play audio: GGU 12.9.mp3

Dhulu ngaya dhiyamali.
I will pick up a stick.
WIIDHAA

*Dhulu ngaya dhiyamay.*
I picked up a stick.

*Buruma nhalay.*
This is a dog.

*Gagil nhama buruma.*
That dog is bad.

*Buruma ngaya bumali dhulugu.*
I will hit the dog with a stick.

*Buruma ngaya bumay dhulugu.*
I hit the dog with a stick.

*Banagay ngaya burumadhi.*
I will run away from the dog.

*Play audio: GGU 12.10.mp3*

(It may help to be holding a photo and talking to a person or maybe your dog.)

*Yaama.*
Hello.

*Maliyaa ngay nhalay, Clyde.*
This is my friend Clyde.

*Dhinawan ngaya ngamiy.*
I saw an emu.

*Clydegubala bandaarr ngamiy.*
Clyde saw a kangaroo.

*Clydegubu bandaarr bumaay barrandu.*
Clyde hit the kangaroo with a boomerang.

*Bandaarrubala Clyde yiiy.*
The kangaroo bit Clyde.

*Banaganhi Clyde bandaarri.*
Clyde ran away from the kangaroo.
Gamil yalu Clydegu bandaarr bumlali.
Clyde won’t hit kangaroos again.

Play audio: GGU 12.11.mp3

Then answer the questions based on GGU 12.10.mp3.

Ngaandi nhalay (pointing to Clyde)
Who is this?

Ngaandu dhinawan ngamiy?
Who saw the emu?

Yaama Clydegu dhinawan ngamiy?
Did Clyde see the emu?

Ngaandu bandaarr buma, minyadhu?
Who hit the kangaroo; what with?

Ngaandi bandaarru yiiy?
Who did the kangaroo bite?

Ngaandi bandaarrri banaganhi?
Who ran away from the kangaroo?