

## A preliminary overview of the verb in Amurdak and other Iwaidjan languages

Full presentation  
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The Iwaidjan languages, a Non-Pama-Nyungan language family from Northern Arnhem Land, have been called a “very un-Australian language family” (cf. the title of Evans 2000) for a number of reasons (see Evans 2000 for details). This talk examines the verbal morphology of the Iwaidjan languages, as this family in itself is far from homogenous in this respect. The inner core, formed by the so-called Iwaidjic languages (see Evans 2000: 95 for a family tree), displays more of what is common in the verb morphology of Top End languages. However, languages like Marrku and Amurdak diverge from this “areal norm” in significant ways. For example, in both languages verbs belong to conjugation classes, whereas in most other languages verbs are either transitive or intransitive and differences in conjugation are connected to this property. While little more can be said about Marrku (see Evans, Williams Malwagag & Marrala 2006), it is obvious that the verb morphology of Amurdak shows more properties that set it apart from the inner Iwaidjan languages. This concerns the lack of object representation in the verb prefix, the absence of tense as a grammatical category, the development of a person sensitive negation prefix and other features (see Handelsmann 1991 and Mailhammer forthc.).

Far-reaching formal and functional differences within a language family are well-known cross-linguistically, and need not stand in the way of the postulation of genetic relationships, as can be seen from the diversification of e.g. the Indo-European language family. However, this presupposes an explanation of how, and perhaps even why, these differences arose. This talk aims at exploring possible pathways of development of the verb morphology in the Iwaidjan languages, focusing in particular on Amurdak, as it displays the largest number of deviations from what might be called the “common” model. In spite of these differences, however, the traditionally assumed grouping of Amurdak with the Iwaidjan language family (see e.g. Evans 2000; against Dixon 2002, but cf. critique in Evans 2005) receives additional support, as significant similarities can be found, which shed light on the morphological development of the verb in Amurdak and other Iwaidjan languages.

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