4 The Corpus of Murriny Patha Talk-in-Interaction
This chapter deals with methodology. Because every research environment is different and every project has specific requirements, what follows is a rather personal account of how I came to have the corpus that I do and analyze it in the way that I have. Included in this account are some of the lessons that I’ve learnt along the way. I also discuss what I take to be some of the strengths of the research to date, some of the limitations, and some of the ways I propose to strengthen the analysis in the future.

4.1 Documenting Murriny Patha language and song
In 2004, I joined musicologists Allan Marett and Linda Barwick, and linguists Michael Walsh, Nicholas Reid and Lysbeth Ford in a five-year research project to document Murriny Patha language and song. The aim of the project has been to document three highly endangered publicly performed song repertories: djanba, wurltjirri and malgarrin. During the course of the project we have worked together with a number of singers, dancers and composers to document the song-texts and collect stories and explanations about performance, song creation, and how these song traditions were born and are passed on. This collaborative research project is set up in partnership with the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre and the Wadeye Knowledge Centre. The project was initiated as a result of requests by ageing Murriny Patha performers to ensure that the knowledge of these song traditions is not lost when they pass away. In addition to research, the project team has been engaged in establishing a sustainable database of songs and performances that is locally accessible in Wadeye.

Readers may wonder how a PhD on conversation fits within a project whose primary objective is to document traditional song. The project team rightly expected that the varieties of language used in the three song genres would differ in certain respects from the “everyday” language. I felt that any measure of how song language differs from everyday language would benefit from a thorough description of what naturally occurring conversation is actually like. So in parallel to the documentation of the three song genres, I have embarked upon a description of mundane talk-in-interaction.
4.2 The corpus
My understanding of the Murriny Patha language is informed by four field trips to Wadeye and one trip to Kununurra, in Western Australia. During the 14 months in the field I have collected eight field notebooks, 23 hours of video recordings and more than 250 hours of audio recordings. I have transcribed and glossed four monologic creation myths, approximately 150 song texts and numerous (largely monologic) discussions about particular songs.

The transcribed corpus that informs the interactional analysis consists of natural conversations and interactional discussions extracted from research sessions into Murriny Patha song. This material, which was recorded entirely with a dedicated audio recorder, consists of just under an hour of talk-in-interaction. My initial attempts at using video to record conversational interactions were unsuccessful. However, in 2007 I was successful in recording approximately nine hours of multiparty interaction on video. This material has yet to be transcribed and analyzed.

All of the discussions hailing from the musicological research into Murriny Patha song (three recordings) were multiparty interactions, as were three of the four natural conversations. One lengthy natural conversation is dyadic. Each of the natural conversations were recorded (predominantly) without non-Aboriginal people in the vicinity. Most of the interactional corpus is presented as Appendix D.

4.3 Recording natural conversation
Even if you have been introduced to the people you intend to work with, as a complete outsider you cannot just walk into an Aboriginal community with microphones and video cameras and expect to record natural conversation, especially as a field researcher. Aboriginal people are used to seeing outsiders fly in and fly out of their communities, telling them what to do, promising this and that and delivering little of what they promise. For this reason, all outsiders are initially viewed with a justifiable degree of suspicion. With time, most Aboriginal people move beyond their initial apprehension, particularly if they realize that you intend to be around for the long haul. To a certain degree what researchers are able to achieve depends on their history with the community in question. It takes time to build people’s confidence. I do not believe it is possible to ethically record natural conversation until people are at ease with the researcher and clearly understand what it is the researcher wants to do and why.
Very little natural conversation has been analyzed in Australian Aboriginal languages. There are a number of reasons for this. Conversation is difficult to record successfully. Overlap makes it difficult and time-consuming to transcribe. Most of the severely endangered languages have only a handful of elderly speakers and are not spoken on a daily basis. Sometimes for reasons of taboo, the last speakers cannot speak to each other (Evans 2001), or sometimes they simply don’t like each other. Even when this is not the case, it can still be difficult to effect an environment conducive to getting speakers just to converse in an endangered language, leaving aside the complications of recording naturalistic data. Those speakers may view the mixed languages or creoles that they speak on a daily basis as degenerate and unworthy of study. However, even if studying conversation is not a priority for the researcher, this doesn’t diminish the value in trying to record at least some natural conversation. The recordings may become highly valued by subsequent generations of would-be language learners and future researchers.

In the case of endangered languages with only a few speakers, priority has justifiably been given to obtaining primary grammatical and lexical descriptions. Secondary linguistic pursuits such as the analysis of conversation and historical linguistics can only take place once there are existent primary descriptions. The elicitation of syntactic constructions, verbal paradigms, kinship terminology, the recording and transcription of (usually monologic) traditional narratives and oral histories – these are some of the “normal” activities associated with building up a primary linguistic description. These “normal” pursuits do not go unnoticed by Aboriginal people. These are the activities that Aboriginal people associate with linguists and expected us to perform, especially when involved in the documentation of important cultural knowledge. Initially it was difficult for my consultants to appreciate that I might be interested in mundane conversation. This is not a problem for the linguist interested in recording natural conversation. On the contrary, I will show how it can be used to your advantage.

In recording natural conversation the researcher has to confront the problem of the observer’s paradox (Labov 1972). The problem for the researcher is how to record natural conversation when one’s presence has such a large influence on the content of the data. If the researcher is not a fluent speaker of the language under investigation, speakers may change from the vernacular to another language, so as to accommodate
the researcher’s incompetence. Even if the researcher is competent in the language, native speakers might choose more explicit referential expressions than they would ordinarily use, so as to accommodate the researcher’s lack of shared common ground. Even the presence of recording equipment can have an influence. Microphones and videos can be obtrusive and difficult to ignore when they are close enough to adequately pick up the sound. Short of making illicit recordings with spy-cameras and secret microphones, it is nearly impossible to be sure that you are getting completely natural data.

The researcher is faced with the questions, “Do the benefits of a good quality recording outweigh the disadvantages of my influencing the content of the material?” and, “What, if anything, am I going to do to minimize the effects of the observer’s paradox?” These questions do not have a single answer that will serve for every situation. They need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, depending on what the objective of the research is, and what is achievable on the given occasion. Murray Garde, a fluent Bininj Gun-wok speaker, decided that in order to get the most naturalistic recordings possible, he would mike himself up with the other conversationalists (Garde 2002: 32). He felt that if he were to make himself scarce from the recording sessions, he would be more conspicuous by his absence. Alas, I cannot claim such competence with Murriny Patha so I have generally chosen to remove myself from the scene and hope my absence would not be noticed.

Even as a non-speaker, or as a partial speaker, being conspicuous by one’s absence is a genuine issue. Setting up recording equipment and walking away from it for half an hour is noticeable behaviour. How can you expect people to not notice that there is a microphone in front of them, recording their every word? I believe it is possible, to a certain degree. My strategy is to encourage people to forget that the equipment is sitting there, still running. With a few good distractions, I’ve managed to get people to forget the microphone, even though it was right in front of their eyes. I’ve had more success at this when making audio recordings. Recently however I’ve adapted the techniques and had some success with video as well.

Recording natural conversation requires the consent of one’s consultants. My approach was to seek permission to record them when they weren’t expecting it. I explained my interest in everyday talk – the kind of talk that happens when there are no researchers hanging around asking questions. I sought consent to leave the
machine running, at some unspecified time in the future. Having done this, I found that people did not get upset when they discovered they are being recorded. They were surprised – not because they weren’t expecting it, but because even though they were expecting it, they still managed not to notice. For my consultants, this is surprising but not upsetting. The “discovery” usually made people laugh.

From there, the strategy is quite simple. I’ve found that the best environment for recording conversation is in the bush, generally in my consultants’ traditional country. In this environment, Aboriginal people tend to feel very comfortable. A picnic is a good idea. Food, a fire and a cup of tea are all conducive to conversation. The country itself provides a very natural setting for conversation. The bush is full of interesting things such as birds, animals and bush-tucker. These things and the country itself trigger memories and invariably people find plenty of things to talk about. These things also provide useful distractions from the recording equipment. The microphone is placed on the ground in the middle of the conversing parties. The recordings of conversation are then piggy-backed on top of some other “formal” storytelling or elicitation session (see Figure 4.1). At the completion of the “formal” sessions, I simply ask my consultants if they would like a cup of tea. Everyone likes to drink tea in the bush. It is very relaxing. I then go away to make some tea, leaving the flash-ram recorder running. Believing the “real work” over, my informants then do the natural thing and converse (see Figure 4.2). I then return with cups of tea and disappear again, occasionally making myself visible nearby so as not to be too conspicuous by my absence. After twenty minutes or so, someone often discovers that the flash-ram recorder is running, or I appear and stop the machine. At first this resulted in hysterical laughter as my consultants realized that they had been recorded. Although some people were initially surprised, I’ve found that nobody objected to keeping the recordings (although they were told that the recordings could be erased if they weren’t happy about it). Indeed those same people assisted me for
many months in the transcription and translation of the conversations. Their surprise, as indicated by the bursts of laughter, demonstrated that the distraction had been successful. It was on this basis that I chose those recordings for transcription, as I was sure that my own presence, and the presence of the equipment, had had minimal influence on the content of the discussion.

That is how I began recording natural conversations. However the more conversation I recorded, the less need there was to piggy-back the activity on some prior session. Just having food and being in the bush was usually enough of a distraction to make most people forget or ignore the equipment. Sometimes I announced the beginning of the recording, introduced the participants, the date, the setting and then made a cup of tea. Before long people either forgot they were being recorded or didn’t care. In this case, having things lying around can help. A microphone and a flash-ram recorder are more noticeable sitting on their own than when surrounded by a fire, a billycan, a tucker box, water bottles, bags of clothing and cooking gear. The recording equipment begins to resemble the other ignorable items of paraphernalia that you have when you’re in the bush.

Although recording natural Aboriginal conversation can be difficult to achieve, recent improvements in digital technologies are greatly facilitating the process. Miniaturization makes the equipment increasingly less imposing. The advent of hard-disc recorders has resulted in hugely increased recording capacity, thus eliminating the need to change tapes or flash cards every hour or so. It is possible to just leave the hard-disk recorders recording for five hours at a time.\(^\text{52}\) This is a huge assistance in minimizing the observer’s paradox, as the constant monitoring of recording equipment is noticeable. Being able to record five hours in a session means that there is a very good chance of getting at least thirty minutes of quality conversational

\(^{52}\) It is possible to configure them to automatically segment the recordings into separate sound files after so many minutes.
material in a day. Whilst this may not sound very impressive, transcribing and glossing thirty minutes of conversation is a massive task.

Another question the researcher is faced with is whether to use a dedicated audio recorder or whether to incorporate video. Choosing straight audio comes at the cost of losing the important information provided by gesture, gaze, body positioning and spatial orientation. Video is a critically important part of any documentation project, and captures essential information about the interaction. Unfortunately the difficulties of minimizing the observer’s paradox are multiply compounded with video. A camera on a tripod can be very imposing, especially if there is an operator behind the camera. My numerous attempts at mounting a camera on a tripod and then walking away were quite unsuccessful. The camera was quite large and the tripod even larger. The people I was trying to film were conscious of the camera at all times and were quite stilted in their behaviour and restrained in what they said. When I moved the camera far enough away to be less imposing, the conversationalists obscured each other from the field of vision. Given my interest in person reference, the decision not to make heavier use of video was not taken lightly. However, I was not able to proceed with the equipment I had available at the time. On my final fieldtrip I was lucky enough to borrow a much smaller camera with a wide-angle lens and a very short tripod. I was able to get this camera close enough that the conversationalists did not obscure each other. These as-yet untranscribed recordings are vastly superior in that the participants behaved much more naturally.

The microphone is the most important piece of equipment. The better the microphone, the less onerous the task of transcription. Recording with a well-placed stereo mike can make the critical difference in identifying speakers in overlapped, multiparty speech. If you have a photograph of the recording scene, it is possible to pinpoint in your headphones, exactly where an unidentified voice is coming from and correspond it to where people were sitting, thus eliminating the other voices until the correct speaker is identified.

Mike placement is therefore extremely important, though it pays to be flexible. The small tripods are great for recording outside on the ground. Indoors, I prefer a large articulated mike-stand that reaches over my consultants’ heads. If people are sitting around a table, it is not particularly intrusive. Piggybacking the recording of conversation on top of “formal” recording sessions provides a “legitimate” means of
getting the mike placement correct. Once this is achieved, recording levels can be adjusted. However, you should attempt to get the levels correct on the first go. Unless you have a very long lead and are able to keep the audio recorder out of sight, no further adjustments can be made to the levels without drawing attention to your equipment. If your mike placement is good, then it is safer to err on the side of lower recording levels and thus avoid clipping the audio tracks, should people begin to speak loudly. Lower levels can be normalized in post-production to bring them to adequate levels for transcription.

4.4 The nature of the corpus

4.4.1 The “natural” conversations
The corpus of Murriny Patha talk-in-interaction analyzed in this thesis includes 45 minutes of transcribed natural conversation. When I describe the material as “natural conversation” (as opposed to “naturalistic conversation”), I use the term in the sense that the conversationalists were, in my impression, not paying undue attention to the recording equipment. I believe my attempts to minimize the effects of the observer’s paradox were quite successful. The naturalness of the recordings is reflected in what people talk about and the uninhibited way that the conversationalists interact. The narratives that unfold in these conversations are quite unlike any that I’ve heard in more formal or more staged settings and it is this (in my opinion) that makes them special.

Whether dyadic or multiparty speech, all of the natural data includes narratives. In fact, probably 80% of this material consists of narratives. Some of the narratives have a distinct starting point. On the other hand, some of the narratives just flow one into the other, as their telling becomes relevant. The telling of these narratives becomes relevant through the turn-by-turn unfolding of the conversation.

All of the natural conversational data was recorded on visits to the clan estates of my consultants. Usually these were weekend picnics, which would normally incorporate a search for bush tucker. A particular favourite is *ku thali*, or “longbum” (*Telescopium telescopium*), a particularly tasty mollusc that lives in the mangroves. The recordings are frequently punctuated by the sounds of people smashing these “longbum” shells against each other so as to out get the molluscs that live inside. Creatures such as *ku thali*, *ku kunen*, “mud clams” (*Polymesoda erosa*) and *ku tjipmandji*, “spiny chitons” (*Acanthopleura spinosa*) are not only favourite foods, they
are also favourite topics of conversation. Invariably eating these foods reminds people of funny events concerning family members and their involvement with these foods.

The biggest weakness of the corpus is the absence of video footage. Where this impacts most noticeably on the analysis is with the inter-turn silences. Some of the transcripts have numerous inter-turn silences of up to two seconds that are not obviously treated as being symptomatic of problems with the prior turn\textsuperscript{53}, whereas other similar silences are treated as possibly problematic (in that self-repairs ensure). For the analyst, it is frustrating not being able to see whether the conversationalists are preoccupied with other activities. The lack of data on gesture, gaze and body positioning also limits the analysis of turn-taking. Whilst turn-taking is not the focus of the dissertation, the visual cues that play a part in next-speaker selection or provide insight into the lack of uptake in self-selection are missing from the transcripts and thus limit the analysis in this regard.

However, perhaps because of the lack of video footage, to some degree I have compensated by paying extra attention to prosodic information. I suspect, for instance, that had I had the “distraction” of video images, I may not have discovered the phenomenon that I call locally marked prosodic reference (see §9.4).

4.4.2 The song sessions
In June 2004 and June 2005, our research team investigating Murriny Patha song all converged on Wadeye at the same time. During this period we conducted intensive investigation on the \textit{djanba}, \textit{wurltjirri} and \textit{malgarrin} repertories. These sessions were a collaborative research effort involving two or three linguists, one or two musicologists and as many as six Murriny Patha singers and performers, depending on who was available on the particular day. Generally a recording of a particular song was played and then our consultants contributed information about the song-text, about who composed the song, when and where, etc. Because these songs are received by composers in dreams, our consultants usually discussed who had the dream in which the song was received, and what happened in the dream.

After a song is played, the researchers asked questions so as to elicit the song text. Normally however, before asking questions our consultants usually discuss

\textsuperscript{53} Gardner & Mushin (2007a) report similar findings for mixed Garrwa/English/Kriol interactions recorded in Borroloola, N.T.
amongst themselves what the song is about. These discussions provided an opportunity for our consultants to “get the story straight”.

On the 14th and 15th of July 2005, I recorded these research sessions. The second variety of talk-in-interaction under investigation in this dissertation are those discussions in Murriny Patha that followed the playing of a song. This talk-in-interaction is not natural in the way that the conversations are natural. Our informants were always aware they were being recorded and there was no attempt to encourage them to ignore this. These discussions were elicited – either by the playing of the song, or by a direct question from one of the researchers. Although the discussions are entirely in Murriny Patha, the topic of discussion is, broadly speaking, very much controlled by the researchers.

With three or four eager researchers and half a dozen eager Aboriginal consultants, all keen to demonstrate their knowledge of the songs, it was a unique opportunity that alas, can never be repeated (three of the Murriny Patha team-members have since passed away). However, these research sessions were not without their problems. Morphosyntactically, the song-texts are extremely complex and, for an outsider, are conceptually quite difficult to understand. They have multiple interpretations and multiple layers of meaning. Like any collaborative effort, it takes time for a group of people to learn to gel together as a team. There was a certain degree of pressure to make the most of the rare opportunity provided by the mid-year break between university semesters. With so many people in a small room, there were frequent schisms as single conversations split into multiple conversations. The transcripts often show considerable overlap, making them difficult to analyze. Interlocutors quite often disagree on historical details relating to the song or to the texts. Normally however a consensus is reached on what information is to be passed on to the researchers.

Because it was clear that we researchers were missing a lot of interesting and useful information, I decided to transcribe some of these discussions to find out what was going on. This decision was a good one as some of the most complex and interesting fragments of interaction hail from these brief discussions.

4.5 Analyzing the transcripts
Because I am not a native speaker of the language, I cannot help but approach the transcripts from the perspective of an outsider looking into a culture that is not my
own, even though it is culture to which I have had exposure as a fieldworker. This has
the advantage that I am able to see certain actions and phenomena that are perhaps too
ordinary for native speakers to see. On the other hand, I am certain to have missed (or
misunderstood) other details because I do not have native speaker competence in the
language.

As much as possible the approach to analysis employs the micro-analytic
techniques of conversation analysis. Thus I draw, when appropriate, on many of the
standard analytic tools such as sequence organization, word selection, repair, turn-
taking and turn construction/design. The power of the conversation analytic method is
that it seeks its validation for an analysis in the co-participants’ orientation to the
unfolding interaction. The rigour of this approach is that it eschews subjectification
and guesswork. As Schegloff (2005: 476) suggests:

  Virtually all turns at talk display – and are taken to display – their speaker’s understanding of
  ‘the current state of play’, that is, either (as the default) the just preceding turn relative to
  what has preceded it in the sequence, or some earlier turn which it is designed to target. For
  this reason, researchers who have arrived at some analysis of what some turn is doing can
  seek to ground that analysis in the displayed understanding by a co-participant in a
  subsequent turn or other form of responsive conduct – an understanding on which the next
  move in the interaction has been based. That is to say, there is a proof procedure internal to
  the data. (Emphasis in the original.)

As the methodology of conversation analysis has developed over the last forty
years, analysts have made a point of both discussing in detail the single cases of a
particular interactional practice, as well as presenting multiple cases of parallel
practices (usually in less detail), thus demonstrating that such occurrences are not
isolated phenomena. An inevitable consequence of having a corpus as small as it is, is
that the analyses are skewed towards the single cases, rather than the multiple cases.
One hour makes for a small window through which to peer at Murriny Patha talk-in-
interaction. This dissertation contains numerous detailed single analyses of
interactional practices. In the future, as my research into Murriny Patha talk-in-
interaction continues and the corpus expands, more of the multiple cases will emerge.

Perhaps where this dissertation differs from other CA accounts is in the amount
of ethnographic backgrounding required for fragments to be interpretable to the
reader. Almost all close analyses of conversational fragments in CA require some
ethnographic backgrounding. It is normal for analysts to describe the setting of the
interaction, how many participants there are and how they relate to one another, the
significance of the occasion that that brings the participants together, what the
participants have been discussing previously, etc. In this regard, the fragments in this
dissertation differ only by degree. I provide the same sorts of required information. However, sometimes the fragments require considerably more backgrounding than fragments from more mainstream “European” cultures because the topics of discussion will seem quite alien to a non-Murriny Patha audience.

One area in which the analysis of fragments differs most from more conventional CA, is that the micro-analyses are often supported by genealogical information. If the dissertation were not about person reference, this might not be as necessary. However, because Murriny Patha speakers use kin terms so often, and because both the society and the grammar of the language are structured according to classificatory kinship principles, the best way to understand why people use the kin terms that they do (or not use them when they might) is to support the conversations with the relevant genealogies. Thus, in addition to assisting with translating and glossing the texts, my consultants (who were also the participants in the conversations) provided their own genealogies and explained how the persons referred to in the texts fit into those genealogies. Fragments of conversation are regularly accompanied by branches of family trees. In this way, I have incorporated micro-genealogies into the microanalysis.

4.5.1 On micro- and macro-analysis
As a reaction to the earlier Schegloff paper on micro- and macro-connections (1987), Stephen Levinson and Emanuel Schegloff debate in the October 2005 issue of Discourse Studies the dangers of mixing one’s analytic frameworks (Schegloff 2005) vs. the dangers of succumbing to an “interactional reductionalism” (Levinson 2005). I do not wish to wade into this theoretical debate. Rather, I wish to state that the position I have adopted in this thesis is to adhere as closely as possible to the rigorous framework that CA provides. However, on occasions I’ve felt necessary to step outside of the transcript because it was my impression that the interlocutors themselves were referring or alluding to macro-social structures such as family units or clans, or to macro-notions such as conjoint land ownership and its inherent rights and responsibilities. On such occasions it has proven difficult (thus far) to find displayed evidence for what I take to be appeals to these macro-notions within the recipiency of other interlocutors. That is not to say that recipients did not acknowledge such notions, only that I can’t hear it in the particulars of the interaction,

54 The fragments in question are Fragments 2, 61, 62, 63 and 65.
or do not recognize the acknowledgement as such. This is another occasion where the analysis is not served by the absence of video footage.

References to specific clans or family groups are usually quite clear. If a particular group is not named explicitly then “paucal non-sibling” references predominate (see §6.1.3.1, p. 264). These specific references are either done with free or bound pronominals or with the inclusory construction (see p. 102). More subtle however, are the allusions to conjointly owned country – either via totemic associations, or though deictic expressions (e.g., “this/here”, see Fragment 65, p. 232). I am particularly referring to when speakers draw upon a land-association or a kinship link in order to make authoritative claims about matters that they are discussing. When telling a story or discussing a song-text, Murriny Patha people regularly pick out an individual that is central to the story/song (e.g., a protagonist, prior storyteller, singer, performer, composer etc.), and by associating the that person to themselves, make implications of the following sort: “That person belonged to my country/was my kinsman, so I know what I’m talking about” (see § 8.3).

On what basis therefore do I claim that this is what speakers are doing? As a conversation analyst I feel that the claims I’m making should be grounded in the recipients’ own responses to the unfolding talk. As a fieldworker, I feel that the fourteen months of close consultation with the conversationalists in the transcripts, and the collaborative research on songs replete with subliminal meanings requiring “rich interpretations” (Barwick et al. 2007), have equipped me to recognize claims of this sort when they present themselves. Should it not be possible therefore to reconcile these approaches?

Readers are reminded that the interactional analysis of Murriny Patha talk-in-interaction is in its infancy and the corpus that I am drawing on is still small. Although it is difficult at this stage to find within the microscopic field of view the “proof” of such macro-associations, this does not mean that they will not emerge with time and with a more expanded corpus. We know that these associations are important for Aboriginal people. Is it unreasonable to expect that they should not be played out locally? Although we know something about the institutions that are important in Aboriginal societies, we know practically nothing about how they are actually spoken about in the vernacular, when researchers are not present. For example, even though all of the clans have names, there are no Murriny Patha category terms corresponding
to “clan”.\textsuperscript{55} Effectively, there are terms for the tokens but not for the type. Similarly, I am unaware of category terms corresponding to “family” or to “moiety”.\textsuperscript{56} As speakers of English, it is hard for us to imagine how we would explain the workings of government if there were no category terms corresponding to “political party”; or how we would explain what Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are if there was no category term corresponding to “religion”. We might equally ask if it is even reasonable to expect that speakers’ appeals to macro-associations should provoke a reaction at all from co-participants – are such appeals even noticeable to co-participants? They are certainly noticeable to me, but then unlike the the Murriny Patha speaking participants, I am not subjected to a “member’s only filter” (Enfield 2007). I have picked up CA’s microscope and turned it to material that conversation analysts don’t usually examine. Just because the microanalytic clues are not readily apparent in the snapshot of interaction that this corpus provides, does not mean they are not produced. It might take time to learn to read the signs at this high magnification.

We know that Murriny Patha people have these social structures, yet we know little about how they are spoken about on a daily basis. We know that they lack specific category terms for some of these structures, even though individual tokens have specific names. Perhaps these social structures are actually enacted through the aggregate of multiple references and multiple associations that are made in both ritualized interactions and in everyday conversation. In conversation, such associations are certainly frequent, even within the small corpus I’m working with (see §8.3.1). Rather than consider this to be a shortcoming in the analysis, we might view this as a locus for further research. Further micro-analytic evidence is likely to emerge as the collection of multiple cases expands.

\textbf{4.6 Conclusion}

What I have done is fuse ethnography and conversation analysis. I am not the first person to do this and I am certain that I won’t be the last (see Garde 2002, 2008; Levinson 2005; Liberman 1985; Moerman 1988; Spielmann 1998, inter alia). However, this is not what I had intended. I had hoped I might keep the approaches

\textsuperscript{55} All of the clans take a generic modifier \textit{yek}, \textit{yak} or \textit{rak}, (as in \textit{Yak Nangu}, \textit{Yek Maniny} and \textit{Rak yederr}) though none of these (\textit{yek}, \textit{yak} or \textit{rak}) exist in isolation.

\textsuperscript{56} Although the two moieties \textit{tiwanggu} “wedgetailed eagle” and \textit{karrtjin} “brown falcon” have waned in importance, they are certainly still recognized.
“pure”, so to speak, to be true to each on their own terms. I have tried to be clear about which insights come from the transcript, and which come from elsewhere. Nonetheless, the result is a compromise. Perhaps this compromise is an inevitable consequence of trying to adapt a framework that was developed for working on one’s own language to the task of investigating talk within a culture that is so different to my own. I have wrestled to achieve a best fit between quite differing methodologies. Some might construe this approach as a type of Culturally Contextualized Conversation Analysis, à la Moerman (1988). Personally, I am not enamoured of such labels. I am not trying to define my approach, nor justify it from a theoretical standpoint. I have simply tried to describe what I have done, to characterize my analysis, and to state where I think it can be taken in the future.