6 Denotation in Murriny Patha Morphosyntax
My approach to studying person reference is an interactional one that considers referring to be an action that speakers undertake as part of making themselves understood. Although we can take it as given that Murriny Patha speakers refer to persons and things, we need to ask what sort of process referring actually is. How many ways of referring are there? What is it that speakers refer to when referring? How much information are speakers giving away in making whatever they’re referring to accessible to the hearer? Why do speakers refer to things in the way they do, rather than in some other way? Does a particular referential strategy do only referring or does it do something else as well? In this dissertation, I look at these questions and others and provide a description of some of the interactional machinery that speakers and hearers use in constructing and interpreting references to persons.

This chapter examines some of the components that make up that machinery. In particular, it attempts to address the thorny question, “What are referential expressions in Murriny Patha?” The question is less than straightforward because in this language, the grammatical information that is implicated in the task of referring is generally not compartmentalized into discrete units that are separate from the units carrying the grammatical information that is implicated in the task of predication. Thorny as the question is, it is necessary to address it in order to tackle the bigger questions about how speakers use referential expressions to refer. The chapter does not pretend to provide a comprehensive grammar of the language. It does present a preliminary sketch of those aspects of the morphosyntax that play a role in person reference. Even in this regard, there is still much to learn. However, for the purpose of the present dissertation, it should equip the reader for the interactional analyses that follow.

6.1 A referential sketch of Murriny Patha
Murriny Patha is predominantly a head-marking language. As such grammatical relations are typically expressed through the verbal morphology, rather than through case marking on nominals or word order. The verb complex is of the polysynthetic type, exhibiting both agglutinating and fusional morphology. The verb complex incorporates a restricted set of “body part” nominals. No other nominals may be
incorporated within its internal structure. For certain non-singular human referents, the marking of the number of participants is particularly complicated because this task is handled by two or three separate morphemes in combination. In some cases, these morphemes occupy discontiguous slots within the verbal template.

As is typical of polysynthetic languages (Evans 2003a: 227-228), the relationships between actants and predicates are particularly blurry because the forms that express these roles are multifunctional. Arguments, which in most Indo-European languages are normally associated with overt noun phrases, in Murriny Patha are often expressed both within and outside the verb, at the same time. Therefore, there is no neat correspondence between referential expressions and arguments of the clause. On the other hand, verbs, which are normally associated with predication, can play the additional role of specifying overt nominal expressions – that is, delimiting the “domain of reference” of overt nominal expressions; even those that are not morphologically expressed within the verb complex (e.g., the above example 5.1, p. 60). The relationship is further complicated by the existence of certain word classes that fall midway between prototypical nominals and prototypical verbs. They contain roots that largely hail from the classes noun and adjective, yet they inflect for person, number and gender, using suffixes that are elsewhere associated with the verb complex. These words are predicating, yet some of them don’t have the full range of inflections associated with prototypical verbs.87

The Murriny Patha language has rich verbal agreement and does not require subjects to be explicitly expressed by overt nominal expressions. Languages of this type have been variously referred to as pro-drop or null-subject languages (Chomsky 1993 [1981]). In verbal headed sentences, subjects are obligatorily expressed within the verb by pronominal cross-reference markers. Subjects (and indeed other non-subject arguments) may be additionally expressed by full noun phrases or free pronouns. Although “verbal arguments” may cross-reference overt nominals, it is not necessarily the case that the overt nominals will share all (or any) grammatical features with verbal arguments (person, number and gender etc.), though each is said to “agree” with the referent.

87 See Walsh (1996b) and §6.1.4 of this dissertation for details.
In example 6.1, the third person singular feminine free pronoun *nigunu*, “she” is coreferential with the third singular subject of the verb *dinidha*, “she/he was sitting”. Both agree with the referent in terms of various feature specifications (person, number, and in the case of the free pronoun – also gender). Yet the free pronoun and the verbal subject agree with each other only with regard to person and number, but not with regard to gender, because gender is not a feature that both share. It is quite common for overt nominals not to have features shared with their coreferential verbal arguments, though they will each “agree” on their own terms with the referent (that is, they each have features that they share with the referent). The manner in which grammatical arguments are jointly expressed by overt nominal expressions and verbal pronominals will be taken up in §6.2.

### 6.1.1 Person, gender, number and siblinghood

In Murriny Patha multiple morphemes regularly act in concert to express grammatical function. Semantic roles are regularly expressed by several morphemes, both internal and external to the verb. This many-to-one mapping of morphology onto grammatical function requires care in the application of nomenclature. A grammatical description of the language thus calls for a specialized language-specific terminology (see for instance Walsh 1996b), often with rather unorthodox glosses.

The Murriny Patha language has a very rich system of pronominal inflection. This is true of both free pronouns and bound pronominals. Australian languages generally mark 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons, with an additional inclusive/exclusive distinction made in 1st person (non-singular). Murriny Patha is typical in this regard. It also has a four-way number distinction: singular, dual, paucal and plural. Paucal number is fuzzy in terms of its scope. It corresponds with the English *few* or *several*. Speakers describe paucal as being between three and around ten participants, whereas plural is described as being considerably more. In spite of the fuzziness between paucal and plural, it is fair to say that in discourse, Murriny Patha speakers tend not to play fast and loose with their marking of number. For instance, they do not mark arguments as paucal or plural if they have in mind a dual referent.
For most Australian languages the marking of gender is restricted to the third person singular. In Murriny Patha the marking of gender has been extended into the dual and paucal number categories and also into first and second persons. This has been achieved through the use of four fusional morphemes that mark number, gender and the category “non-siblings”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>paucal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masc (all males)</td>
<td>-ninth</td>
<td>-nemel-name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fem (at least one female)</td>
<td>-ngintha</td>
<td>-ngime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Non-sibling Number Markers

These morphemes mark gender by making a distinction between groups of non-sibling participants that are all male (dual masculine and paucal masculine) and groups of participants including at least one female (dual feminine and paucal feminine). Technically, the distinction is not one of masculine vs. feminine but one of masculine vs. non-masculine (that is, not exclusively masculine). In spite of this I will persist in using the labels “dual feminine” and “paucal feminine”88, though the reader should remember that referents expressed by such denotata, may well include male participants.

The non-sibling number markers work in concert with bound pronominals to share the responsibility of marking grammatical number. Because the four fusional number marking morphemes additionally mark “non-siblings” and gender, the language has been able to extend the marking of gender to non-singular, non-sibling arguments denoting first, second and third persons. This is achieved through the presence or absence of the non-sibling number markers.89 The presence or absence of the non-sibling number markers gives the language a three-way opposition between sets of paucal and dual participants whose number comprise (a) exclusively male non-siblings, (b) non-siblings that include at least one female and (c) siblings. This is demonstrated in example 6.2 by comparing the following free personal pronouns.

6.2
6.2a nan’guninthna 2DU.M.NSIB you two male non-siblings (♂♂)
6.2b nan’ginginthna 2DU.F.NSIB you two non-siblings (♀♀ or ♂♀)
6.2c nan’gu 2DU.SIB you two siblings (♀♀, ♂♀ or ♂♂)

---

88 Because some of my readers may find the morphological complexity sufficiently unfamiliar, I won’t place an unnecessary cognitive burden on them. I find the idea of “non-masculine non-siblings” far more difficult to conceive of than “feminine non-siblings”.

89 For a diachronic account of how Murriny Patha was able to extend the marking of gender into these person categories see Blythe (in press).
The language makes no gender-distinction between sets of siblings. This is not surprising because “siblings” are indicated by the absence of the non-sibling number markers and it is these morphemes that mark the gender of non-sibling denotata. Effortlessly, sets of siblings are denoted by pronominal arguments that are not morphologically marked as “non-siblings”. They are also not morphologically marked for gender.

In many polysynthetic verbs the pronominals are not adjacent to the number markers. Thus the marking of grammatical number is handled by separate discontinuous morphemes.

6.3 (2006-07-01)B02a, 166485_169205)

wurdanangayitjinginthayu
wurdana -nga -yitj -ngintha -yu
3/DUS.30.PSTMP -1SI0 -tell_story -DUT.F.NSIB -0
CSP -1O -COV -NUM -PART

“The two non-siblings at least one of whom was female were telling me”.

In example 6.3, the true grammatical number of the subject argument, which is dual, is expressed by the combination of -ngintha, the dual feminine non-sibling number marker, and wurdana, the portmanteau pronominal morpheme that specifies the subject (amongst other things). Note that in this example, the two morphemes are separated by two other morphemes, the indirect object and the coverb. Number, as marked morphologically by wurdana, is not specific as to whether the referent should be singular or dual because effectively its denotatum is both singular and dual. Morphologically “singular/dual” subject marking pronominals read as dual when they combine with dual non-sibling number markers (as in 6.3). They generally (though not always) read as singular when there is no dual non-sibling number marker to be found.

The presence and absence of the non-sibling number markers result in skewings between the morphological marking of number in bound pronominals and the verb’s grammatical marking of number. The nature of these skewings will be discussed in more detail in §6.1.3.1 and §6.1.3.4.

From the perspective of person reference, the most important grammatical categories in Murriny Patha morphosyntax are person, number, gender and “siblinghood”. “Siblinghood” is whether or not participants stand in a biological or

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90 Note the absence of -nintha and -ngintha in example 6.2c.
91 See example 6.47 on p. 132 for an exceptional case.
classificatory “sibling” relationship to each other. The non-sibling number markers are curious creatures from a referential perspective. Because the marking of these semantic categories, particularly number, is the product of a morphological division of labour between pronouns and the number markers, they are just as important referentially as the pronouns with which they share this role. The net result is that grammatical arguments do not have a 1:1 relationship with bound pronouns. The relationship is considerably more complex.

6.1.2 The noun phrase

Noun Phrases (NPs) are one of two “super-categories” of referential expression in Murriny Patha. Typically, NPs are recruited for locally-initial reference to persons. There are five categories of NPs that are regularly used for locally initial reference (see §7.1.1). The other super-category consists of the Murriny Patha verb and verb-like expressions that incorporate pronominal cross-reference markers (see §6.1.4). Verbs (or rather, the pronominal cross-reference markers embedded within verbal words) that are unaccompanied by co-referential NPs, are typically recruited for locally subsequent reference to persons. More often than not, locally initial reference is achieved with an overt NP and verb, in combination. That is, the overt NP plus a coreferential “verbal argument” are jointly recruited for locally-initial reference to persons.

If an overt noun is present, the NP will be headed by the noun. If no overt noun is present, the leftmost word – usually the nominal classifier – will act as the head. In the absence of a nominal classifier, adjectives or demonstratives can head noun phrases. A maximal projection of the Murriny Patha noun phrase is given in 6.4. The ordering presented is not fixed, though most noun phrases do conform to this pattern.

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92 Murriny Patha is one of around twenty Australian languages known to have grammaticalized some aspect of its kinship system. Evans (2003b: 24) defines such “kintax” as “the obligatory encoding of kinship or moiety relations in core grammar.” For instance, Martuthunira has a verbal affix that conveys (in certain circumstances) that participants are members of the same generation set (Dench 1987). Lardil has alternate sets of pronouns that distinguish whether between participants are in “harmonic” vs. “disharmonic” generational sets (Hale 1966), whereas Kaytetye pronouns distinguish both alternating generation sets and alternating patrimoieties (Hale 1966; Koch 1982). Amongst Australian languages, Murriny Patha appears to be unique in having grammaticalized siblinghood.

93 Although the brackets suggest optionality, for each overt noun phrase there must be at least one nominal word. However, the optionality of the brackets does capture that the presence of an overt NP is not a requirement for reference to persons.
6.4 [(nominal classifier) (noun) (adjective) (demonstrative) (numeral)]=(enclitics)

In reality, the NP rarely consists of more than three words, usually one or two at the most. In natural conversation, NPs consisting of three or more words generally do not co-occur in the same clause as a verb containing anaphoric “verbal arguments”. Where anaphoric relations do occur between verbal arguments and NPs, the NP tends to be fairly minimal – bare nouns, bare nominal classifiers or a nominal classifier with an accompanying modifier. Larger nominal groups tend to occur in verbless constructions. Although numerals regularly appear toward the right of the NP’s head, and Murriny Patha has (or perhaps had) an elaborate system of cardinal numbers (Walsh 1976b: 194-199)\textsuperscript{94}, the number of human participants is far more likely to be marked in the verb than in the NP.

There are certain sorts of nominal expressions that do not conform to the schema proposed in 6.4. The first of these are personal names. The second of these are free personal pronouns. The third of these are compounds comprised of a personal name and a non-singular free pronoun. In these cases, the personal pronoun does not modify the personal name (that is, it does not mark possession, see §6.1.2.2.3.2), but rather the named participant is taken to be one member of the set expressed by the pronoun. Collocations of this type are known as “inclusory constructions” (Singer 2001). Thus in example 6.5, Merrnguyi is taken to be one member of the set of two participants expressed by the third person dual feminine non-sibling pronoun. Because “dual feminine” requires that only one participant be female, the other participant may actually be a man. Collocations such as these consisting of a personal name and a third person dual feminine non-sibling pronoun, are usually used for reference to husband and wife couples.

6.5 2006-07-01JB02a, 141002_142239

*Merrnguyi peningintha*

woman’s name 3DU.F.NSIB

“Merrnguyi and her husband”.

(Literally: “Two non-siblings, at least one whom was female and whose name was Merrnguyi”.)

\textsuperscript{94} The inordinately complex system that Walsh described is a base two system, embedded within a base five system, utilizing both hands and feet. It is incredibly unwieldy and for this reason, I doubt that many people use the system today (though this has not been specifically investigated).
6.1.2.1 Nominal classifiers

All Murriny Patha nouns belong to one of the ten Murriny Patha nominal classes listed below in Table 6.

- **kardu** human beings (Aboriginal, alive)
- **ku** animates, flesh, meat, game, dead bodies, non-Aboriginal human beings, spirits, totems, totemic sites, money, women’s genitalia
- **mi** non-meat food, tobacco, cigarettes and faeces
- **tju** strikers: thunder, lightning, playing cards, offensive weapons excluding spears
- **thamul** spears
- **thunggu** fire and things associated with fire
- **kura** water sources, things derived from water and liquids (except salt-water and bodily fluids)
- **murriny** language and speech
- **da** place and time
- **nandji** residue class (includes body-parts, inanimate objects, defensive weapons, trees, vehicles, the sea, songs, performances)

Table 6 The Murriny Patha Nominal Classifiers

Most nouns belong to a single nominal class and their class membership is semantically based. For a general discussion of the semantic basis of the classification system see Walsh (1997). On the other hand, adjectives, demonstratives and numerals may occur in any nominal class. Even in the absence of an overt noun, their assignment to a nominal class is on the basis of the noun they would modify or specify, if one were present.

The Murriny Patha verbal morphology does not agree (in terms of shared features) with any of the ten nominal classes. Murriny Patha verbs (and free personal pronouns) do have a system of grammatical gender, though there is no concordance between this gender and the system of nominal classification. Nor is there any agreement morphology distributed across the noun phrase. The nominal classifiers are distinct morphological words. The nominal classifier is not obligatory, though most noun phrases do have a classifier. If a classifier is present, it will be the left most word in the nominal group.  

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95 According to Dixon (1982, 1986, 2002), classifier systems may be distinguished typologically from noun class systems. Noun class systems have morphological agreement (affixes) distributed across the
From the perspective of person reference, what is significant is that there is only the one class, *kardu*, for Aboriginal human referents. There are not separate classes for males and females. For this reason, and due to the lack of agreement morphology, the nominal classes should not be mistaken for genders.

How bare nominal classifiers are to be interpreted depends on whether they classify the subject or direct object of the clause. If a bare nominal classifier immediately preceding a verb is coreferential with the subject of that verb, then the verbal subject and classifier jointly express an indefinite subject. In example 6.6, *ku*, the nominal classifier for animates is coreferential with the subject of the verb *bamarlartnupani*, “he/she/it will be biting him/her”. In this case the classifier delimits the scope of the verbal subject, eliminating human Aboriginal participants as possible biters of the young girl. In cases like this, the denotatum of the classifier provides the scope for the indefinite referent. The subject of the expression should thus be taken to be “something of the animate *ku* class”.

On the other hand, bare nominal classifiers that immediately precede a verb but are not co-referential with the subject of the verb, do not express indefiniteness. Bare nominal classifiers frequently specify the patient in transitive and ditransitive clauses. Third singular human patients and non-human patients (irrespective of number) are morphologically unmarked in the verb complex (as in example 6.7). Similarly, bare nominal classifiers may express adjuncts in intransitive clauses, as in example 6.8. In these cases the nominal classifiers make vague references, even though what the phrase, whereas classifier systems tend to have a single free form classifier and no concordance. Noun class systems tend to be closed systems to which all nouns pertain, whereas classifier systems are generally not closed systems and have larger number of classes. Murriny Patha exhibits properties of both types of system (Walsh 1997). Given the lack of fit of Dixon’s distinction with certain Daly languages (Murriny Patha, Ngan’gityemerri, Marrithiel), Harvey & Reid (1997: 13) call into question the utility of this dichotomy.

It is possible that this combination might also be used for generic references, though I have no data to support this proposal.
speaker has in mind may be quite specific, as is the case in both 6.7 and 6.8. These two examples hail from a lengthy narrative about spiny chitons. In neither 6.7 nor 6.8 were the molluscs in question mentioned for the first time.

6.7 (2004-08-08)B03b, 835535_838536

*ku ningamyirrirrwarda*

- *ku* animate 3S.27.NFUT -yirryirr -warda
- NOMCL CSP -COV -adv

"Then she boiled the things of the *ku* class [spiny chitons, *Acanthopleura spinosa*]."

6.8 (2004-08-08)B03b, 787725_789484

*Ku wurdamninhtararl*

- *ku* animate 3S.30.NFUT -ninthan -rarlarl
- NOMCL CSP -NUM -COV

"The two men were laughing about that thing/those things of the *ku* class [spiny chitons, *Acanthopleura spinosa*]."

Non-subject bare nominal classifiers function as definite proforms, standing in place of fuller nominal expressions. As such they serve as vague referential expressions, because the scope of their reference is no less than the full scope of the nominal class. These vague reference forms are generally recruited for subsequent reference to entities that have been referred to previously.

Vague referential expressions such as the “locally-subsequent” bare nominal classifier *ku* in example 6.9 – when used for initial reference to entities – invite the recipients to “maximize their referential inferences” (Levinson 1987: 67) and endeavour to identify what the speaker has in mind (Schegloff 1996a: 451). The very broad range of the denotata encompassed by the *ku* classifier leads to a wide range of possible referents, and multiple ways of interpreting such ambiguity. Narrators frequently make use of this ambiguous *ku* classifier in this very minimal fashion, because it is loaded with sexual innuendo (cf. Table 6).

6.9 (2004-08-08)B03b, 566797_570785

*Wulgumen than'guriwaknintha bere ku warda kanyire mamnintha.*

- *wulgumen* noun 2S.19.FUT -n'gu -riwak -ninthan -bere -ku -warda -kanyire
- NOMCL CSP -DO -COV -NUM adv NOMCL adv DEM

- *mam* animate -ninthan
- 3S.3.4_say.NFUT -DU.M.NSIB
- CSP -NUM

"‘Old woman, you follow those two boys. There’s stuff of the *ku* class around here’, the two men said.”
In 6.9, *ku warda kanyire*, “there’s stuff of the *ku* class around here”, is a nominal predication. This *ku*, which is the subject of this nominal headed sentence, expresses an indefinite reference. Thus the bare nominal classifier, as the subject of the nominal headed sentence, parallels the bare nominal classifier in example 6.6 which, as the subject of the verbal headed sentence, was also used for indefinite reference.

Just as the nominal classifier can delimit the scope of the verbal subject (as in 6.6), the semantics of the verb can also delimit the scope of the nominal classifier (that is, restrict the scope of the set of entities that the nominal classifier denotes). In example 6.10, the scope of the expression *mi nyinirda*, “that thing of the vegetable class” is delimited by the semantics of the coverb -*winyipak*, “to spill”. Because all foods of the vegetable class are solids, there remains only one liquid member of this class that can spill, namely *mi yilulul*, “diarrhoea”. Thus diarrhoea is the only vegetable class entity that could possibly have spilled from the speaker’s cousin’s child.97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment 10 (2004-09-12)B04, 179653_183951) Yawu, <em>mi nyinirda kambinyipakkurran</em> nginarr ngaydhangunu.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yawu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hey!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nginarr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cousin’s_child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Hey, that thing of the vegetable class (diarrhoea) is spilling out from my cousin’s child.”

In conversation, nominal classifiers tend not to precede personal names (nor kinterms). On the other hand, in creation myths the nominal classifier *kardu* regularly precedes the names of totemic ancestors. Many Murriny Patha people are named after their totemic ancestors that feature in these stories. Thus it is the presence of the nominal classifier *kardu* in front of the personal name that serves to distinguish totemic ancestors from living people of the same name.

### 6.1.2.1.1 Existential negation

The non-existence of any entity is expressed by prefixing the relevant nominal classifier with the existential negator *ma*-. In example 6.11, the non-existence of men is expressed with *ma*- prefixed to the “human” classifier *kardu*, whereas in Fragment

97 See also example 5.1 on p. 60 for another case of verbal semantics delimiting the scope of a bare nominal classifier.
19, line 513, the non-existence of the baby’s bottle is expressed by the prefixation of *ma*- to *nandji*, the “residue” classifier.

**6.11** (2005-07-14JB02c, 113338_11530)

*Nugarnka makarduwa*

```
nugarn -ka ma- kardu -wa
man -TOP not- human -EMPH
noun -PART NEG - NOMCL -PART
```

“As for men, there are none.”

Fragment 19 Longburn Dinner (2004-09-12JB04, 0605.472)

511 child: Mummy mummy bottle.

513 mother: Manandji pangurda karrim ngarra da.

```
ma- nandji pangu -da karrim ngarra da
not- residue DIST -LOC 3S.3_stand.EXIST LOC home
NEG- NOMCL DEM SUF CSP PREP noun
```

“It’s not here, it’s back there at home.”

The nominal classifiers *da* (time and place) and *murriny* (speech and language) take a different prefix *manangga*-. This prefix has a broader base of attachment than the prefix *ma*-, so apart from attaching to the appropriate nominal classifier (e.g., *da* in example 6.12), it may also attach to other nominals. In line 2 of Fragment 20 Manman negates the quantifier *wurnangat*, “many”, producing *mananggawurnagat*, “there weren’t many”. This is a correction of Elizabeth’s claim that there had been a lot of people present.

**6.12** (2005-07-05JB01, 910212_911198)

*Mananggarda dangatha.*

```
manangga- da dangatha
not- place yet
NEG- NOMCL adv
```

“It [the former mission of Port Keats] wasn’t there at the time.”

Fragment 20 (2005-07-14JB02c, 267459_270544)

1 *Eliz* Yu kardu wurnangatya.

```
yu kardu wurnangat -ya
yes human many -DUB
INTERJ NOMCL adj -PART
```

“Yeah many people.”

2 *Mnnn* Mananggawurnangat

```
manangga- wurnangat
not- many
NEG- adj
```

“There weren’t that many.”
6.1.2.2 Nominal morphology

Three case inflections have been reported for nominals: ergative, instrumental and dative (Street 1987; Walsh 1976a, b, 1997). The ergative and instrumental cases have the same forms -re ~ -te. The instrumental and dative (-nu) cases are not uncommon but the ergative occurs so infrequently in naturally occurring discourse that its status as a case inflection cannot be confirmed. Because transitive subjects are obligatorily marked as nominative in the verb, Walsh notes (1976b: 165-166) that nominals are only marked as ergative when emphasis or disambiguation is required. In my experience, the “ergative” is produced under elicitation, though not often. It was unattested in the one-hour corpus of transcribed talk-in-interaction, unattested in any of the monologic texts that I transcribed, and only once attested in a corpus of more than 100 song texts. Therefore a considerably larger corpus will be required to better understand its role in discourse.

More frequently attested than the case markers are a range of deictic particles, some of which have discourse functions. These particles attach to both nominal and verbal words. Although tentative glosses have been provided, the discourse functions are generally not well understood. The set includes -ka, “topicalizer”, -wa, “emphatic”, -gathu ~ -kathu, “focus” (when attached to person denoting nominal, otherwise this particle is directional). Further work on information structure will be required to ascertain the roles of these particles (and that of the “ergative”) in discourse.

6.1.2.2.1 Demonstratives

A modern description of Murriny Patha demonstratives would be well served by detailed analysis of video interactions. For the reasons outlined in §4.3, such an analysis of Murriny Patha has yet to take place. The spatial cues provided by gesture and gaze that regularly accompany demonstrative use are missing from the corpus that informs the present analysis.98 Analysing audio recordings of telephone interactions would also be useful because this would ensure that speakers and addressees remain in distinct locations.99

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98 Cutfield (forthcoming) provides a modern description of demonstrative usage in Dalabon. The research draws on elicitation prompts developed at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen (Wilkins 1999). Her findings seem to have some parallels with the present description provided for Murriny Patha.

99 Although the paucity of private telephones in Wadeye has been prohibitive, the recent arrival of mobile phones may make this approach more feasible in the future.
There are four demonstratives that are frequently used in Murriny Patha discourse. The semantics of these terms are not well understood. For most, the underlying semantics are obscured by the fact that the terms are regularly modified by the locational and directional suffixes -rda, “location”, -gathu, “towards”, and -wangu, “away from”.

Two of the demonstratives have definite spatial semantics. Pending a more rigorous analysis, I will for the time being gloss the terms kanyi and pangu as “proximal” and “distal”, respectively; though I have doubts about the veracity of the latter gloss. *Kanyi* places a referent within the “here-space” of the current speaker (Enfield 2003). *Pangu* is most frequently used to refer to things that are far from the speaker (hence the gloss “distal”). I suspect however that a genuine distance component to its semantics is lacking and that the term is definable only with regard to the referent being outside the “here-space” of the speaker (cf. Cutfield forthcoming; Enfield 2003).

The other two demonstratives are *pana* and *nyini*. *Nyini* is an anaphoric demonstrative. It is the demonstrative that is most likely to be used for subsequent reference to an entity previously mentioned. In line 281 of Fragment 21, Elizabeth makes initial reference to the period of time when her own son passed away. The time is marked by the temporal locative -re, suffixed to an addressee-associated “grandson” kinterm, *kanggurl*. She makes subsequent reference to the same period of time in line 287, which was when a different person returned to Wadeye from a community in the east. This subsequent reference is made using the anaphoric demonstrative *nyini*, which is also suffixed with the temporal locative -re.

**Fragment 21** Sorrow (2004-08-08JB03b)
281 Eliz Ngarra ku kanggurl nyinyire worda lutj mam ngayya.
   ngarra ku kanggurl =nyinyi -re lutj mam ngay -ya
   RELPRO animate br.so.so =2sPOS -TEMP die 3sS.34.do:NFUT is -DUB
   It was when your late grandson passed away on me.
282 (0.5)
283 Phyl Yu;
   Yeah.
284 (0.86)
285 Eliz Eh,
286 (0.26)
287→Eliz Nyiniware wurdawurlyu,
   nyini -wa -re wurdam -wurly -yu
   anaph -EMPH -TEMP 3sS.30.NFUT -return -PART
   That was the time she came back.
On the other hand, *pana* is most frequently used for establishing initial reference. It might best be called the “recognitional” demonstrative, in that it presents the referent as “known” to the recipients of the talk and urges them to identify the referent.

In Fragment 22 Manman is telling a story. In the story her husband called out to her (line 266) and the two of them set off across country (line 268) along a track. In line 270, she refers to the track that they took. She does so with an expression incorporating both the Murriny Patha and English words for “road”, along with the “recognitional” demonstrative *pana* – here suffixed with the directional *-wangu*, “away from”. This demonstrative *pana* presents the track as potentially recognizable to her interlocutors. In line 275, Elizabeth makes a collaborative contribution towards telling the story by naming the place to where the track goes, *Thay Punyek*. Manman’s acknowledgement token *Mm:.* (line 277) confirms the correct identification of the road in question.

As previously mentioned, all of the forms take locative and directional suffixes. In such cases *nyini-rda* (anaph-LOC) and *pana-rda* (that.you.know-LOC) tend to mean “the place already mentioned” and “the place that you know about”, respectively. It is difficult to determine whether *pana* has a locational component to its semantics. Because current speakers frequently urge their recipients to recognize referents that are “not here”, and given that most things that are “here” are instantly recognizable,
further research is required to determine whether any “not here” readings are incidental to the fact that recognition is being urged. An additional form karda, regularly glossed as “here”, I believe to be a phonologically reduced variant of kanyirda (PROX-LOC).

6.1.2.2.2 Interrogatives

There are a number of interrogative pronouns in Murriny Patha that are used for constructing question-word questions (Wh-questions). Three of the most frequently used interrogatives are ngarra “what/where”, thanggu “what” and nanggal “who”. There are a number of other interrogatives that are morphologically derivable from these, such as ngarrare “how” (ngarra-re “what-INSTR”) and thanggunu “why” (thanggu-nu “what-DAT”). More interesting from a referential perspective are the series of nominal class specific interrogatives. These interrogatives are historically derivable from the fusion of nominal classifiers with the interrogative pronouns thanggu, “what”, and nanggal, “who”. Attested examples include:

- thanggugu/thangkugu, “what thing of the ku class?” (< thanggu + ku)
- thanggurda, “what place?” / “what time?” (< thanggu + da)
- thanggumi, “what thing of the vegetable class?” (< thanggu + mi)
- thanggurnandji, “what thing of the residue class?” (<thanggu + nandji)
- nanggalardu, “who” (of the human class < nanggal + kardu)

These interrogatives are often used in word searches (e.g., thanggurda in line 1 of Fragment 23).

Fragment 23 Ninbingi (2005-07-15)B01a, 172318_180261) (Fragment is simplified)

Eliz werrpi thangguwa- thanggurda da pangu werrpi kingawatkem.

- werrpi: noun
- thangguwa: what-EMPH
- thanggurda: what_place
- da: Dist
- pangu: NOMCL
- kingawatkem: DEM

werrpi haz_from_bushfire thanggu -wa thanggurda da pangu werrpi kingawatkem.

- haz_from_bushfire: noun
- thanggu: INT
- wa: -PART
- thanggurda: INT
- da: NOMCL
- pangu: DEM

- haz_from_bushfire: noun
- kingam: -wat =kem
- thangguwa: 3S.25.EXIST -be_visible_from_afar =3S.1.sit.EXIST
- -wa: -CSP
- thanggurda: -COV
- da: =SERCSP

“The haze from the bushfire, what's that place way over there where you can see the haze from the bushfire?”

100 The forms thanggurnandji and thanggurda suggest that the classifiers da and nandji may be underlingly retroflex, though retroflection does not surface word initially.
Another word-search interrogative, *nan*, “what’s its name”, also is regularly preceded by a nominal classifier, where the combination functions in much the same fashion as the classifier specific interrogatives (e.g., in line 481 of Fragment 24).

Fragment 24 (2004-08-08JB03b, 517690_519037)

481 Eliz: Ku *nan* punnadha na

> “The two brothers were going [hunting] for that animal, what’s its name, weren’t they.”

482 Phyl: Ku mendi.

> “For small green turtles.”

As well as their question-forming and word-search functions, the classifier specific interrogatives may also serve as indefinite pro-forms expressing non-specific, generic or unidentified referents pertaining to the relevant nominal class. For example, *thanggugu* in example 6.13 expresses “some sort of animal”. In example 6.14, *thanggugu* expresses a vaguely defined entity of the *ku* class. In this particular case the referent is quite specific. However, because the speaker’s interlocutors haven’t finished telling the story that goes on to reveal what sort of entity they had been talking about, the speaker is unsure as to what sort of entity she is actually referring. (See Chapter 2 for an analysis of the passage from which this line was extracted).

6.13 (2004-09-12JB04, 0733.97)

> “Something there might bite her on the hand.”

The use of interrogatives for indefinite references is extremely widespread among Australian languages (Dixon 2002: 327-335).
6.14 (2005-07-05JB01, 968236_970519)
ku panda thanggugu thurdananginthayitjthatjini ha ha.
ku panda thanggugu thurdananginthayitjthatjini ha ha
animate anaph what_animate 2S.30.PSTIMP -DU.F.NSIB -tell_story-PST =2S.1_sit.PSTIMP laughs
NOMCL DEM INT CSP -NUM -COV -TNS =SERCSP
“You two women were telling a story about that ku, whatever it was, ha ha.”

6.1.2.2.3 Free personal pronouns
The Murriny Patha free pronouns serve two main functions. Firstly, they function as definite referential expressions where they relate a specific referent to the unfolding talk. Secondly, they mark possession.102 Possessive personal pronouns are used when some person or entity is referred to as being in a “possessed” relationship to another person or persons. That is to say, possessive pronouns are used to link whatever is actually being spoken about to some other person or persons. Personal pronouns that function as definite referential expressions (referential pronouns) are free-standing independent words, whereas the possessive personal pronouns appear to be weakly bound to a preceeding phrase.103

6.1.2.2.3.1 Personal pronouns as definite referential expressions
Free-standing personal pronouns may occur in verbless predications or they may co-occur with verbs in verbal predications. Free pronouns inflect for the same semantic categories (person, number, gender and siblinghood) as their bound verbal counterparts. If a free pronoun is co-referential with the subject of a verb, it will share the same feature values as the subject of the verbal word, as in 6.15.104 Recall however that 3rd person singular verbal subjects are unmarked for gender (e.g., example 6.1, p. 98).

6.15 (2006-07-01JB02a, 968236_970519)
Nan’gunginthadha tjininginthadha
nan’gunginthadha tjini -nginthadha dha
2DU.F.NSIB 2S.1_sit.PSTIMP -DU.F.NSIB -PST
PRO CSP -NUM -TNS
2DU.F.NSIB 2DU.F.NSIB S.sit.PSTIMP
“You and one other person, at least one of whom is female, were there.”

102 Unlike many Australian languages Murriny Patha does not make a formal distinction between alienable and inalienable possession.
103 As such they might be thought of as enclitic, though the term elitic is problematic (Zwicky 1995). These morphemes are clearly prosodically bound and syntactically dependent, though seemingly are resistant to morphophonemic processes.
104 In example 6.15, the subject of the verb tjininginthadha, is jointly expressed by the 2nd person “singular” classifier subject pronominal tjini, and the dual feminine non-sibling number marker -nginthadha, in combination (see §6.1.3.1). This 2nd person dual feminine non-sibling combination agrees with the free pronoun.
Because free personal pronouns agree in terms of the same inflectional categories as verbal arguments, when they co-occur with verbs in verbal predications, they are morphosyntactically redundant. They are however far from redundant pragmatically. Free pronouns that are co-referential with verbal subjects are typical locally-initial reference forms, whereas free pronouns that head nominal predications are more likely to be locally subsequent reference forms. Free pronouns are sometimes used as “alternative recognitional” expressions (Stivers 2007). That is, when the speaker presumes the hearer to know the person by name, these free pronouns constitute locally initial recognitional reference forms that tend to be used as alternatives to proper names. 106 Third person singular free pronouns (which mark a gender distinction that is not marked in the subject of the verb) are sometimes used in locally subsequent positions to set up contrasts (as in Fragment 40, p. 183).

6.1.2.3.2 Personal pronouns as possessives
Possessive pronouns have more or less the same phonological forms as “referential” pronouns, though they exhibit different syntactic behaviour. Possessive personal pronouns appear to be attached (at the word level) to a preceding “possession” group. For instance, in example 6.16, the personal pronoun marking possessor is attached to the noun phrase mudika murndak, “old car”.

6.16 (JB2005FN1, 133)
ngay marda manganyert nangawathanu mudika murndak ngayya

ngay marda mangan-nyi-art na nga-watha-nu [mudika murndak]=ngay-ya
1s belly 1s.9-NFUT-2sDO-get/take 2sS.8-do.NFUT-1sIO-repair-FUT [car old]=1sPOS-DUB
PRO noun CSP-DO-COV CSP-IO-COV-TNS [noun adj]=PRO-PART
“I want you to fix my old car for me.”

In the case of the third person singular possessives, the gender of the pronoun agrees with the possessor, not with the possessed. Thus if a person possesses some

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105 The conversational corpus has insufficient examples to be definitive on this latter point.
106 Stivers does not include free personal pronouns as alternative recognitional expressions. English free pronouns are locally subsequent reference forms; that is, they constitute the unmarked forms for use in locally-subsequent positions. In Murriny Patha verbal cross-references on their own (that is, without accompanying co-referential nominal expressions) are the unmarked forms in locally subsequent positions and free personal pronouns are typical locally initial reference forms. (See §7.1.1).
107 Some of the forms undergo a degree of phonological reduction. For example =nukun, 3SMPOS, is often realized as =nukan, as in example 6.21.
108 In fact, this situation holds true for all gender marking personal pronouns (3rd, 2nd and 1st person exclusive dual and paucal non-siblings, in addition to 3rd person singular).
thing, and the person is of gender \( \alpha \), then the “person’s thing” is expressed in Murriny Patha as:

\[ \text{(POSSSESSED)} (\text{POSSESSOR}_\alpha) = \text{PRO}_\alpha \]

where \( \text{PRO}_\alpha \) is a possessive pronoun of the same gender as the possessor. Thus in example 6.18, the third person singular masculine possessive pronoun =\text{nukunu} agrees in gender (masculine) with Mark, the man who own’s the car; whereas in 6.19, the third person singular pronoun =\text{nigunu} (here pronounced =\text{niyunu}) agrees in gender with Nganiminyi, the woman whose grandson the speaker is referring to.

\[ \text{6.18} \quad \text{(JB2007FN1, 33)} \]
\[ \text{nandji trak mark nukunu} \]
\[ \text{[nandji residue vehicle man’s name]} = \text{nukunu} \]
\[ \text{[NOMCL noun noun]} = \text{PRO} \]
\[ \text{POS} \quad \text{POSR}_n \]

“Mark’s car”

\[ \text{6.19} \quad \text{Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12)B04, 0772.286} \]
\[ \text{manggamangga nganiminyi niyunu} \]
\[ \text{[mangga woman’s son’s child -REDUP woman’s name]} = \text{nigunu} \]
\[ \text{[noun noun -REDUP PRNAME]} = \text{PRO} \]
\[ \text{POS} \quad \text{POSR}_n \]

“Nganiminyi’s own son’s child”

In example 6.18 and 6.19, both possessor and possessed are expressed overtly – which is unusual. In natural conversation it is normal for either the possessed or the possessor to be elided.\(^{109}\) Either one or the other may be elided, but not both (the round brackets in 6.17 are intended to represent this optionality, though they do not well capture that the elision of both is not an option). Thus in example 6.20, the person whose son the speaker is talking about (the “possessor” of both the progeny and the groin!) is elided; whereas in example 6.21, the thing that Mark possesses (whatever it was) is elided. In each case, the gender of the possessive pronoun (masculine) agrees with the respective possessors (the father of the man being spoken about, in the case of 6.20; and Mark, in the case of 6.21).

\(^{109}\) Example 6.18 was elicited, whereas example 6.19 has been lifted from natural conversation.
6.20 Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12)B04, 0036.373

wakal nukunu dijethu parnda nukunuya, dinidhayu

[ wakal Ø ]=nukunu-ka dijethu [ parnda Ø ]=nukunu-yu dini-dha-yu
[ progeny ]=3SMPOS-TOP that_way [ groin ]=3SMPOS-?? 3SS.1sit.PSTMP-PST-??
[ NOUN ]=PRO-PART DEM [ noun ]=PRO-PART CSP-TNS-PART

POS D POSRn POS D POSRn

“His own progeny [his son], the ‘fruit of his loins’, was camping that way.”

6.21 Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12)B04, 0036.373

Thurdiwurl Yawu! Marknukun

thurdi -wurl yawu [ Ø ]=mark
2sS.30.FUT -return hey! [ man’s_name ]=3SMPOS
CSP -COV INTERJ [ PrNAME ]=PRO

POS D POSRn POS D POSRn

“Hey! Come back! That’s Mark’s.”

Technically, for these possessive pronouns, the true nature of the gender contrast is feminine vs. non-feminine, rather than feminine vs. masculine. In example 6.22, the possessive pronoun =nukunu agrees in gender with its neuter possessor, the rainbow bee-eater, who called out his name, ku tharrmirn’ga (which is what it possesses – a name). This shows that =nukunu is both a masculine possessive pronoun and a neuter possessive pronoun.110

6.22 Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12)B04, 0634.523

ku nukunu dijuthu mankawadha

ku =nukunu dij -gathu mam -ngkawadha
animate =3SMPOS there -towards 3SS.8_say/do.NFUT -say_name
NOMCL =PRO DEM -PART CSP -COV

POS D POSRn POS D POSRn

“It called out its name”.

In conversation, there is a specialized kin-based usage of the pattern given in 6.21 (where the possessor is expressed overtly and what is “possessed” is elided). This pattern is used only for reference to a person’s biological sons and daughters (their progeny). In the “elided progeny construction”, the particular father or mother (the possessor) is overtly expressed, but the kinterm that would ordinarily express “son” or “daughter” is elided. In example 6.23 the speaker is talking about the daughter of a man called Kumay. In this case, the kinterms ordinarily used for daughters (either newuy, specifically “daughter”, or wakal, “progeny”) have been

110 This state of affairs parallels the English possessive pronouns her (feminine) vs. his (non-feminine):
   - Each woman called out her name. (feminine)
   - Each man called out his name. (non-feminine)
   - Each person called out his name. (non-feminine)

It should be pointed out that this feminine vs. non-feminine contrast is the polar opposite of the masculine vs. non-masculine contrast that exists between dual and paucal non-sibling referents (see §6.1.1).
elided. As a result, the gender of the person in question is not expressed (though it is clear enough from the context that the referent is a woman).

6.23 On the Flat (2005-07-05JB01, 1080592_108166)

*Kumaynukunu*

<table>
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<th>POSRn</th>
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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>kumay</td>
<td>]=nukunu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>man's_name</td>
<td>]=3SMPOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>PRNAME</td>
<td>]=PRO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Kumay’s son/daughter.”

In example 6.23 the name of the progenitor (*Kumay*, the father) is given. In 6.24, rather than use a name, the specified progenitor (again, the father) is expressed by a kinterm anchored to the addressee. Example 6.24 is a nominal predication. The female referent referred to by the subsection name *Nangari* is described as *kanggurl nyinyi nukunuya* “your paternal grandfather’s [daughter]”; in other words, “Nangari (is) [the one] begotten by your paternal grandfather”. In this case, the gender of the possessive pronoun, =nukunu, which is masculine, agrees with the possessor, the grandfather. This has the effect of marking the progenitor as necessarily being Nangari’s father, rather than Nangari’s mother. In other words, it marks the progenitor as being the addressee’s male *kanggurl* (fa.fa) and eliminates the possibility of it being a female *kanggurl* (fa.fa.zi).

6.24 On the Flat (2005-07-05JB01, 1060747_1063095)

*Yu nangari kanggurl nyinyi nukunuya*

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>yu</td>
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<td>[ Ø</td>
<td>kanggurl=nyinyi</td>
<td>]=nukunu -ya</td>
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<tr>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>[ fa,fa=2sPOS</td>
<td>]=3SMPOS -DUB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interj</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>[ noun=PRO</td>
<td>]=PRO -PART</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Yeah Nangari is your paternal grandfather’s [child].”

In example 6.25, the person being referred to is the (female) speaker’s male cousin, her *pugarli*. She refers to him using another elided progeny construction *pipin ngay niyurnu*, “[the one] for my aunt”, effectively “[the one] borne by my aunt”. Here, rather than use a name, the speaker specifies the progenitor (the mother, in this case) by anchoring the kinterm for aunt, *pipin* (fa.zi) to herself. The gender of the enclitic possessive pronoun =nigunu (female) agrees with the possessor (the aunt), rather than the possessed (the cousin, who is a man).

6.25 Ninbingi (2005-07-15JB01a)

*Mengedha nukunuwathu pipin ngay niyurnu, puwarli ngay nyiniya*

<table>
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<th>POSRn</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>-nge</td>
<td>-dha nukunu</td>
<td>-wathu</td>
<td>[pipin=ngay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sSBay.PSTIMP</td>
<td>-15IO</td>
<td>-PST 3SM</td>
<td>-FOC</td>
<td>[fa.zi=1SPoS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-IO</td>
<td>-TNS PRO</td>
<td>-PART</td>
<td>[noun=PRO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“He was saying to her, my aunt’s [son] (was saying to her), that [bloke is] my cousin.”
6.1.3 The verb complex

Many northern Australian languages feature complex predications of the type *coverb-inflecting verb*. In these constructions, the uninflecting coverb carries most of the lexical meaning whereas the semantically “light” inflecting verb carries temporal and aspectual meaning, as well as some rather imprecise lexical meaning. The inflecting verb inflects for categories such as tense, aspect and mood whereas the form of the coverb does not change. For most of these languages coverbs and inflecting verbs constitute separate phonological words. In many of these languages, even though the coverb regularly precedes the inflecting verb (or vice versa), under certain circumstances, the reverse order may also be permissible. In Jaminjung, for instance, the coverb generally precedes the inflecting verb. However, in the case of repetition it is common to see a reversal of the normal ordering, especially when several speakers co-construct a narrative (Fragment 25).

**Fragment 25** Jaminjung (Schultze-Berndt 2000: 121)

```
JM gurrany buru yanji-igga
   NEG return IRR:2S-go
   “Don’t go back”.
```

```
MW gurrany yanji-igga buru
   NEG IRR:2S-go return
   “Don’t go back”.
```

For some of the non-Pama-Nyungan languages in the north of Australia, the coverb-inflecting verb complex constitutes a single unit that may not be broken up and pronounced with an intermediate pause. Nor may the constituent order be rearranged. All of the Daly languages, of which Murriny Patha is a member, have large, highly agglutinative complexes of this type. These complex morphological units are able to incorporate additional other information (adverbials, directionals, some nominals). For this reason, these languages are generally referred to as polysynthetic. Syntactically they are also known as head-marking (Nichols 1986) because core syntactic roles are more likely to be expressed in the head of the clause (the verb) than on dependents of the clause (overt nominals), or through word order.

The templatic structure of the Murriny Patha verb complex is given below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<td>Num₁</td>
<td>DTRNS₂</td>
<td>IBP</td>
<td>LEX</td>
<td>TNS</td>
<td>Misc₁</td>
<td>Num₂</td>
<td>Misc₂</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1 The Murriny Patha Verb Template
CSP: Classifier-Subject Pronominal – a portmanteau morpheme encoding subject and verb class as well categories as such tense, mood, aspect, valence, orientation towards the ground and movement along a plane. This is the only obligatory element in the complex.

DTNRS: Detransitivizer: a valency reducing morpheme encoding reflexive, reciprocal and inchoative functions.

NUM1: NUM1 takes a number of dissimilar elements: direct and indirect object bound pronominals, ethical datives, subject specifying dual non-sibling subject markers and the “daucal” subject number marker.

COV: coverb – contains two sub-slots IBP and Lex. There may be some fusion between the fillers of these two sub-slots.

IBP: incorporated body part

LEX: Lexical suffix (possibly reduplicated)

TNS: tense

MISC: Miscellaneous – generally adverbials or particles. The two miscellaneous slots may take more than one filler of this type.

NUM2: dual or paucal non-sibling number markers, ethical datives

SERCSP: Serial Classifier-Subject Pronominal – also a portmanteau morpheme encoding subject, verb class (1-7 only), tense, mood, aspect, orientation towards the ground and movement along a plane.

SERNUM: The Serial Number marking slot takes “daucal” subject number marking.

PART: particle

Where Murriny Patha differs from many of the other polysynthetic non-Pama-Nyungan languages is that the verb complex is entirely suffixing, whereas most of the others are generally referred to as prefixing.111 For some verb classes (1-7, 34)112, the Classifier-Subject Pronominal (part of the inflecting portion of the verb complex) is the only obligatory element and this belongs in the first slot in the template. Such verbs lack coverbs, making them “simple” verbs, rather than “complex” (Dixon 2002: 183-201). Classes 1-7 will permit coverbs, though class 34 (say/do) will not. Class 34 is always a simple verb. On this basis, the classifier-subject should be considered the morphological root, with all elements being optionally suffixed (coverb included). Note however that it is the coverb that carries most of the lexical meaning. For other northern Australian polysynthetic languages, this lexical part of the verb (which presumably is not optional in these languages) is generally considered to be the root and all elements to the left are considered as prefixes.

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111 Indeed the demarcation between the Pama-Nyungan family and the families of languages in Northern Australia referred to as non-Pama-Nyungan languages, roughly equates with the demarcation in Capell's (1956) classification, where the labels “prefixing” and “suffixing” were given, on the basis of the verbal morphology.
112 The numbers of the verb classes are those listed in Blythe, Nordlinger & Reid (ms.), which are themselves built on the allocations given in Street (1987).
6.1.3.1 Classifier-subject pronouns

The first slot in the verbal template takes a portmanteau morpheme\textsuperscript{113} that conveys a considerable amount of grammatical information. The Classifier-Subject Pronominal (CSP or “classifier-subject” for short) is this highly fusional element that (in part) encodes the nominative subject.\textsuperscript{114} It is also a verbal classifier and thus indicates the verb class. The verb class conveys some lexical meaning, particularly in the case of classes 1-7 which may occur as simple verbs. In these cases, the verb class conveys such information as valence, motion along a plane, orientation towards the ground etc. In complex verbs, the verb class also classifies the coverb. The semantics of coverbs are dependent on the verb class. Varying the verb class can result in very different senses. For example, the coverb -ruy, when it co-occurs with a class 3 classifier-subject pronounal, means “to dig holes” or “to be digging”. When -ruy co-occurs with a class 20 classifier-subject, it means to “to arrive”, “to visit” or “to come out from beneath a surface” (Barwick et al. 2007).\textsuperscript{115}

From a referential perspective, the most important issue is the semantic division of labour between the classifier subjects and the non-sibling number markers. Grammatically these two sets of fusional morphemes handle person, number, gender and siblinghood. In the case of subjects, this is true for all person and number combinations.

There are two slots available in the verbal template (3 and 9), in which the four non-sibling number markers may go. However the paucal non-sibling number markers are restricted to the second of the number marking slots (9). (All examples between §6.1.3.1 and §6.1.3.4 have been entered into a diagram in Appendix A that demonstrates how number, gender and siblinghood are jointly marked in slots 1, 3 and 9 of the verbal template.)

\textsuperscript{113} Green (2003), for the purposes of historical comparison with neighbouring Ngan’gityemerri, dissects this morpheme into a pronominal part, a verb root and a TAM suffix. However, (as Green himself concedes) while useful for a diachronic analysis, the high degree of interdependence between the forms makes this an unhelpful strategy from a semantic perspective.

\textsuperscript{114} The term Classifier-Subject Pronominal is somewhat inadequate. As we will see in this section, genuine grammatical subject arguments are revealed only through a consideration of these morphemes, in conjunction with the fillers of number marking slots 3 and 9. As such, the word “subject” in Classifier-Subject Pronominal should be understood as meaning that they are involved in specifying the subject of a clause, not that they necessarily do the entire job in their own right.

\textsuperscript{115} The semantics of coverbs await detailed investigation. Until this happens one might be inclined to give two homophous though semantically distinct entries for -ruy in the lexicon.
Note that examples 6.26, 6.27 and 6.28 all have the same CSP form, *parrane*. In 6.26 and 6.27, the paucal non-sibling number markers, *-name* and *-ngime*, in slot 8, mark the gender of the subject as masculine and feminine respectively. They also mark the number of the subject as paucal. On the other hand *parraneriwikthadharra* in 6.28 has a dual subject. So when *parrane* co-occurs with a paucal number marker in slot 9, the number of the subject is paucal, but if there is no overt number marker in slot 9, the number of the subject is dual. Seemingly *parrane* is interpreted differently, depending on whether the speaker is talking about siblings or non-siblings. Thus *parrane* only goes part of the way towards marking the true semantic number of the subject, which really requires an additional consideration of slot 9 for its true reading.

In terms of number, *parrane* is morphologically both dual and paucal, in that it denotes groups comprising both two and a few participants. We thus have a skewing between the morphological number of the classifier-subject pronominal and the true grammatical marking of number (see Table 7). For lack of a better term, I will refer to this morphological number category with the rather inelegant term “daucal” and gloss it “DAUC”. Thus in 6.26, 6.27 and 6.28 *parrane* may be glossed $3\text{DAUCS.19.PSTIMP}$. Note that in 6.28, *parraneriwikthadharra* is also unmarked for gender. Because slot 9 is un-filled by a gender-marked non-sibling number marker, the subject of the verb is
not marked for gender. Furthermore, the verb gets the “siblinghood” feature of “siblings”, by virtue of the absence of a dedicated non-sibling number marker. In short:

daucal subject + neme/ngime  =>  paucal non-sibling subject,
daucal subject + Ø         =>  dual sibling subject.\(^{116}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morph(\prime ) Number of CSP</th>
<th>1 (CSP)</th>
<th>Semantic Number of subject</th>
<th>3 NUM(_1)</th>
<th>6 Cov (LEX)</th>
<th>9 (NUM(_2))</th>
<th>Grammatical Subject</th>
<th>Subject Denotata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“singular” (sing/du)</td>
<td>dani</td>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd sing</td>
<td>({♀}, {♂})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dani</td>
<td>DUAL</td>
<td>-ninthra</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd dual masc non-sib</td>
<td>({♂♂})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dani</td>
<td>PAUCAL</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-neme</td>
<td>3rd pauc masc non-sib</td>
<td>({♀♀}, {♂♀})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“daucal” (du/pauc)</td>
<td>parrane</td>
<td>DUAL</td>
<td>-ninthra</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd dual sibling</td>
<td>({♀♀})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parrane</td>
<td>PAUCAL</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-neme</td>
<td>3rd pauc masc non-sib</td>
<td>({♀♀}, {♂♀})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parrane</td>
<td>PLURAL</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-riwak</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd plural</td>
<td>({♀♀♀♀}, {♂♀♀♀})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Third person Past Imperfective paradigm for the class 19 verb “follow”, showing the skewing between the morphological number of the CSP and the semantic number of the subject argument.

Let us consider example 6.29.

6.29 (JB2007FN01, 35)

\textit{parraniriwakthadharra}

\begin{tabular}{llll}
  parrani & -riwak & -dha & -dharra \\
  3PL S19.PSTMP & -follow & -PST & -moving \\
  CSP & -COV & -TNS & -adv \\
  1 & 6 & 7 & 10 \\
\end{tabular}

“The group of siblings (paucal) were following it”. (♂♂♀♀, ♂♀ or ♂♂)

“They (plural) were following it”.

(♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂wię

In 6.29 the form of the classifier subject \textit{parrani} differs from \textit{parrane} in the previous examples by one vowel. The subject of the verb \textit{parraniriwakthadharra} reads as either plural or paucal siblings. In fact Murriny Patha does not distinguish grammatically between many participants and several participants that are all siblings. Both denotata may be represented by a single morphological number category, “plural”. Thus “plural”, like “daucal” is also numerically skewed in terms of its denotation, though this time between paucal and plural numbers. Thus “plural” in

\(^{116}\) The morphological number category “daucal” (dual/paucal) also occurs amongst the direct object and indirect object series (and also amongst the free pronouns). However for these paradigms, the skewing aligns differently.
inverted commas, can be taken to be the morphological collapse of plural and paucal. Thus *parrani* may be glossed 3PLS.19.PSTIMP.\(^{117}\)

Incidentally, although my consultants explain the distinction between paucal and plural to be “several” vs. “many”, the interactional data suggests that the contrast plays out differently in naturally-occurring talk. Of the paucal denotata, “paucal masculine non-siblings” is the socially-marked (as in “stand-out”) category. Similarly, “siblings” is a socially-marked category. “Paucal feminine non-siblings” is effectively the default position. Most groups of people spoken about are not all siblings and are generally not all males. Murriny Patha speakers tend to refer to specific groups of people (households, clans, a particular person’s mob etc.) using “paucal feminine non-siblings”. On the other hand, “plural” is used for “non-recognitional” group references. That is to say, “plural” is used when the speaker doesn’t expect his interlocutors to try and identify any particular group. In this way, third person plural corresponds to the “non-recognitional they” in English (see example 6.30). First person exclusive plurals are used when the speaker doesn’t expect his interlocutors to identify any individuals in the group, apart from the speaker. In example 6.31, the speaker begins a funny story about an old man. She refers to herself and some others using 1st person exclusive plural. Who the others were was unimportant, because the story was really about the old man and what he goes on to say.

### 6.30 (2005-07-05JB01, 1010685_1013020)

**Murriny bemathaya puddanayitjhatapardi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>NOMCL</th>
<th>adv</th>
<th>-PART</th>
<th>paddana</th>
<th>-yitj</th>
<th>-tha</th>
<th>=pardi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3PLS.30.PSTMP</td>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-COV</td>
<td>-TNS</td>
<td>3PLS.4_.be.PSTIMP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“That’s the end of the story they used to tell.”

### 6.31 (2004-09-12JB04, 0727.328)

**nguddininanggarl kanyi ngarraninawinypak**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nguddini</th>
<th>-na</th>
<th>-nggarl</th>
<th>kanyi</th>
<th>ngarrani</th>
<th>-na</th>
<th>-winypak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1PLекс.29.PSTIMP</td>
<td>-SMIO</td>
<td>-give_back</td>
<td>PROX</td>
<td>1PLекс.19.PSTIMP</td>
<td>-SMIO</td>
<td>-spill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-IO</td>
<td>-COV</td>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-IO</td>
<td>-COV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We were bringing them back to him here and spilling them out [mussels] for him.”

Let us now consider examples 6.32, 6.33 and 6.34, which have a different classifier subject, *dani*, that exhibits a third type of skewing.

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\(^{117}\) Where PL should be interpreted as “plural” (= paucal/plural).
In examples 6.32 and 6.33 the dual non-sibling number markers in slot 3, -nintha and -ngintha, mark the number of the subjects as dual and the gender of the subjects as masculine and feminine, respectively. So in 6.32, the speaker is talking about two men who are not brothers. In 6.33 the speaker is talking about either two women who are not sisters, or a man and a woman who are not brother and sister. The classifier-subject pronominal dani in 6.32 and 6.33 has the same form as the dani in 6.34, yet when it appears without a dual non-sibling number marker in slot 3, the number of the subject is singular. The true grammatical number of the verbal subject argument is revealed only through a consideration of both slots 1 and 3. The classifier subject is thus dependent on the number marking slot (3) for the marking of grammatical subject number. Morphologically, the number category of dani (on its own) is both singular and dual, in that it denotes both singular participants and pairs of participants. Here we see the morphological collapse of singular and dual to result in a composite category “singular/dual” (hereafter “singular”). Yet again this results in a skewing

118 I have decided not to coin a special name for the morphological category “singular/dual”. I will refer to it in writing as “singular” in inverted commas, as opposed to singular (without inverted commas), which is the semantic number category of the subject argument. The same logic applies to “plural”, the morphological category “paucal/plural”. The reason being is that, although I am spelling out the morphological complexity of the number marking in this chapter, for much of the thesis and in
between the morphological number of the classifier-subject pronominal and the semantic number of the subject (see Table 7). Note that daniriwakthadharra in 6.34 is also unmarked for gender. In fact all verbal singular subjects are unmarked for gender. They are also unmarked for non-siblings.

We saw in examples 6.28 and 6.29 that “daucal” CSPs and “plural” CSPs respectively, are interpreted as referring to siblings if they are unaccompanied by a non-sibling number marker. Thus paucal sibling and dual sibling denotata get their siblinghood status by being morphologically unmarked for non-siblings. Thus we have a markedness reversal where “siblings”, which socially is the standout category, is morphologically unmarked due to the lack of a non-sibling number marker. All plural, paucal sibling, dual sibling and singular denotata are also morphologically unmarked for gender. Their grammatical number is contingent on the slots 3 and 9 being unfilled by a number marker. “Singular” classifier-subject pronominals only read as grammatically singular when the number-marking slots 3 and 9 are both unfilled by dual non-sibling number markers, thus eliminating the “dual” reading from amongst the CSPs’ denotata.

The net result is that non-sibling number markers (even morphologically zero non-sibling number markers) are as important referentially as the classifier-subject pronominals. In fact, classifier-subjects in isolation cannot be considered to be denoting the actual grammatical subject of the clause because the denotationally salient categories (person, number, gender and siblinghood) are the product of two slots in the verbal template.

Tempting as it is to consider pronominals to be verbal arguments, as indeed they are for other northern Australian polysynthetic languages (Baker 2002; Evans 2002), we see that the classifier subject pronominals do not carry sufficient grammatical information to adequately index subject arguments in their own right. If we consider verbal arguments as conveying the semantic roles of a clause (agent, patient, experiencer etc.), then it is “arguments” that are implicated in “doing referring”. However, we saw above (examples 6.26 - 6.29 and 6.32 - 6.34) that the semantic role

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119 Strictly speaking, verbal arguments contribute towards conveying the semantic roles of the clause. As we will see in §6.2, nominal arguments also make a contribution.
of agent is properly expressed by combinations of the fillers of the classifier-subject slot (1) and the number marking slots (3 and 9). This is the case even when the number markers are not present (as in examples 6.28, 6.29 and 6.34).

The situation is further complicated in the non-future tense, where the daucal number marking is handled by a dedicated “non-future daucal subject number marker” -Ga that occupies the first number marking slot (3). This morpheme is only attested in the non-future tense. In these cases the responsibility for marking of grammatical subject number is borne equally by three separate morphemes in three dedicated slots.

6.35 (J_B2007FN01, 35)

```
parramgariwakname  
parriam    -Ga    -riwak    -name
3nsS.19.NFUT   -DAUC.NFUT   -follow   -PAUC.M.NSIB  
CSP         -NUM          -COV     -NUM
1   3   6   9
```

“The men (paucal non-sibling males) followed it.”

In example 6.35, the morphological number of the classifier subject, parram, is “non-singular”. As you will see in Table 8, the inflecting verb is marked as daucal by the addition of -Ga, which occupies the first of the number marking slots (3). It is the masculine non-sibling number marker -name in slot 9, that combined with the non-future daucal subject marker -Ga and the classifier subject parram, that together denote a third person paucal masculine non-sibling subject.

120 It is impossible to determine the underlying form of this morpheme because the voicing contrast in stops is neutralized in nasal-stop clusters, and this morpheme only ever occurs following the nasal non-future CSPs. In this environment, there is a tendency to voice stops that form the onset of stressed syllables and to devoice the onsets of unstressed syllables, though this is by no means universal.

121 Although I lack the hard evidence, I suspect the underlying form may actually be -ngGa, at least historically. Given that there is a morphophonemic rule that deletes /ng/ in /ngG/ clusters that follow a preceding nasal, /ng/ would be deleted across the board because all non-future CSP stems end in a nasal. Support for this proposal comes from the daucal detransitivisor -nunGGu which is conceivably a fusional element spanning slots 2 and 3 > -nu + -ngGu where -nu is a detransitivisor and -ngGu would be daucal subject marker (possibly derived from an earlier -ngGa, via no-longer productive vowel harmony).
In sum, information about the subject comes from the number marking slots and the classifier subject slot. For reference tracking, it isn’t important how the information is assembled. What is important, however, is that no single part of the verb can be assigned the label “referential expression”. There are several interlinked sources that the hearer must consider when working out how to interpret the subject. In example 6.35 we see that each of the number marking slots, as well as the classifier subject slot, have equally important roles in marking the true semantic number of the subject argument. As we will see in the next section, the marking of verbal arguments has everything to do with the interdependence between slots 1, 3 and 9. The complexity of the relationship between these slots increases when we introduce direct and indirect object suffixes into the equation.

6.1.3.2 Direct objects
In high transitive verbs, human patients are marked (at least in part) by a direct object pronoun, as in example 6.36. The direct object series of suffixing pronominals are restricted to the first number marking slot (3) in the verbal template (Figure 6.1, p. 118).

6.36 (2004-09-12JB04, 0430.103)
Thurdangiyetjitj
thurdan -ngi -yetjitj
2S.29.NFUT -ISDO -teach
CSP -DO -Cov
1 3 6
“You (singular) taught me.”
Third singular direct objects are not morphologically realized in the verb. As an outcome of this, no gender distinction is made. By and large, non-human arguments do not agree in terms of number. Effectively they take third singular, regardless of how many entities are being expressed. (This is also true of subjects. However, there will be more on this issue in §6.1.5).

The direct objects also express the experiencer in impersonal constructions (Walsh 1987). In these quasi-transitive constructions, a dummy third person singular subject acts on the experiencer which is expressed by a direct object pronominal (as in example 6.37).


Pelpitj marningkawurlidim

Pelpitj  marningkawurlidim
pelpitj  mam  -ngi -ngkawurl =dim
head  3S.S.8do with hands.NFUT -lso -give_headache =3S.S.1sit.NFUT
noun  CSP   -DO -COV =SER.CSP

“I’ve got a headache.” (Literally: “It’s giving me a headache”.)

When it comes to expressing the direct object of the clause, the direct object pronominals are dependent on the non-sibling number markers. As we saw with the classifier-subject pronominals, this dependence on the number markers results in further skewings between the morphological marking of number in the direct object pronominals and the actual grammatical number of the direct object argument. Because these skewings pattern similarly with those of the indirect objects, I will discuss both of these cases together in §6.1.3.4.

6.1.3.3 Indirect objects

The indirect object series of pronominal suffixes, like the direct objects, occupy the first of the number marking slots in the verbal template (slot 3, Figure 6.1). The ability to mark gender in third person singular makes the indirect object series differ from both the classifier subjects and the direct objects. There are two overt indirect third singular indirect objects, -na, masculine and -nge, feminine. Most often, the indirect objects mark recipients of speech verbs (as in example 6.38) and of ditransitive verbs (example 6.39). They also mark beneficiaries (6.40). Less frequently, the indirect objects express goal (as in example 6.41).
6.38 Spiny Chitons (2004-08-08) JB03b, 770547_772207

Yukuy mamma

Yukuy mamna

that's_right

3S.8_say/do.NFUT -3SMIO

"Yes', he said to him."

6.39 Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12) JB04, 1066.414

Nakurl litjpurr ngambamutnu

Nakurl litjpurr nga -mba -mut -nu

adv noun CSP -IO -COV -TNS

"I'll give you the axe later on."

6.40 Longbum Dinner (2004-09-12) JB04, 0527.164

Ku mere thaningekuthathani tebala

ku mere thani -nge -kut -dha =thani tebala

animate not 2S.19.PSTIMP -3SFIO -gather -PST =2S.4_be.PSTIRR deaf

NOMCL NEG CSP -IO -COV -TNS =SERCSP adj

"Deaf one, you didn’t collect anything of the ku class [any longbumps] for her."

6.41 Spiny Chitons (2004-08-08) JB03b, 678053_681518

Awu bematha kanggurl ngay pangu wurdamnawaltjidamatha

awu berematha kanggurl =ngay pangu

Oh! the_whole_time woman's.br.so.ch =1SPOS DIST

INTERJ adv noun =PRO DEM

wurdam -na -waltji -damatha

3S.30.NFUT -3SMIO -have_aching_sides_from_laughing -really

CSP -IO -COV -adv

"Oh my brother’s son’s son was laughing at him there so much his sides were aching."

6.1.3.4 Object pronouns and number marking

In terms of number marking, the direct and indirect object series pattern more or less identically, so I will discuss both of them at the same time. For this reason, I will use the term “object” as a cover term for both series of pronouns. The two object series differ in that the third singular direct objects are morphologically unmarked and hence make no distinction in gender. The marking of number for non-singular objects is a complicated affair that is contingent on the relationship between the two number marking slots (3 and 9). All object pronouns have only one slot available in the verbal template (slot 3). For non-sibling object arguments, a morphologically “dual” (= dual/paucal) pronominal goes into this slot and a non-sibling number marker goes into the second of the number-marking slots in the template (slot 9). If

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122 In fact “object” can also be used to include the no-longer fully productive series of ethical dative pronouns as well. This series will be discussed in §6.1.3.5.
the referent is dual non-sibling, a dual non-sibling number marker goes into slot 9 (as in example 6.42), whereas if the referent is paucal non-sibling, then a paucal non-sibling number marker will be required in this position (as in example 6.43).

6.42 (2004-08-08JB03b2, 849438_850860)
mampirruwardaninha
mam -wirru -warda -nintha
3SS.8say.NFUT -3DAUCIO -then -DU.M.NSIB
CSP -IO -adv -NUM
1 3 8 9
“He then said to the two males (who weren’t brothers).”

6.43 (Djanba No. 25)
ngakumarl nyinirda ngangamnarruruynghimetharra bathukthangunugathuya
ngakumarl    nyinirda    ngangam    -narru    -ruy    -ngime    -tharra
totem     that_place     1S.S.20.NFUT    -2DAUCIO    -arrive    -PAUC.F.NSIB    -moving
noun     dem     CSP    -IO    -COV    -NUM    -PART
1 3 6 9 10
bathuk    -dhangu    -gathu    -ya
place_name    -haling_from    -hither    -DUB
noun    -SOURCE    -PART    -PART
“1, [your] totem, have arrived here, where you mob are, from Bathuk.”

6.44 (2005-07-14JB02c 128923_131089)
“Wurda”, thamuny ngay pumampirrupirrimka.
wurda    thamuny    =ngay    pumam    -wirru    =pirrimka
no    mother’s_father    =1SPOS    3DAUCS.8_say.NFUT    -3DAUCIO    =3DAUCS.1_sit.NFUT
INTERJ    noun    =PRO    CSP    -IO    =SERCSP
1 3 11
“‘No’, they were saying to my two maternal grandfathers.’’

If the object argument is dual sibling, then the object pronominal is again morphologically “daucal” (as in example 6.44). However this time, no non-sibling number marker goes into this 9th slot. In 6.44, the two grandfathers of the speaker (both brothers) are expressed as siblings because the daucal indirect object, -wirru, is unmarked for “non-siblings”. The only overt fillers that can possibly go into slot 9 are either dual or paucal non-sibling number markers. If slot 3 is filled by a daucal object and slot 9 remains empty, then the default reading for the object is dual siblings, by virtue of the daucal object being unmarked for “non-siblings”. Because the non-sibling number markers are fusional morphemes that also indicate gender, their

As stated previously, because paucal feminine non-sibling arguments denote groups of females and males as well as groups that are exclusively female, paucal feminine non-sibling is effectively the default position for referring to a specific mob (i.e., to a particular clan/family/household etc.). In this example (which comes from a djanba song) the addresses are the karda dimirnin clansmen, who all share the particular sugarbag totem that is here being instantiated as the speaker.
absence leaves dual sibling objects also unmarked for gender (cf. examples 6.44 and 6.45).

6.45 2005-07-14|B02c 148890_15099
Yi pigurnugathu puminangan’gungkayerrdha
yi pigunu-gathu pumin - ngan’gu - ngga - yerr - dha
and 3PL-FOC 3PLS.12.PSTMP - IDAUC.EXDO - eye/face - look_around_something - PST
conj PRO-PART CSP - DO - IBP - LEX - Tns
1 3 5 6 7
“And they were looking around [the tree] at us two [sisters].”

Note that “daucal”, which I defined in §6.1.3.1 as the morphological collapse of
dual and paucal number, is skewed differently for the object series from how it was
skewed for the classifier subjects (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morph’mu Number of</th>
<th>3 (Num1)</th>
<th>Semantic Number of</th>
<th>9 (Num2)</th>
<th>Grammatical Object</th>
<th>Object Denotata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Object Pron’mu</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Object Argument</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-na</td>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd sing masc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;DAUC&quot; (DU/PAUC)</td>
<td>-ngu</td>
<td>-mu</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd dual sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-wun’gu</td>
<td>-rru</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-nintha</td>
<td>3rd dual masc non-sib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-n’gu</td>
<td>-wun’gu</td>
<td>-rru</td>
<td></td>
<td>-ngintha</td>
<td>3rd dual fem non-sib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Plural&quot; (PAUC/PL)</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>-ra</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>3rd plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-wun</td>
<td>-wira</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Third person direct and indirect objects, showing the skewing between the morphological number of the object pronominals and the semantic number of the object arguments.\(^\text{124}\)

The relationship between the two number-marking slots is complicated. We have seen that the grammatical marking of object arguments is the product of the relationship between the fillers of slots 3 and 9. We have also seen that the grammatical marking of subject arguments is the product of the fillers of slots 1, 3 and 9. Not surprisingly, grammatical arguments frequently find themselves competing

\(^{124}\) The short forms in both series occur in all tenses except the non-future. In non-future forms all underlying bilabial glides surface as stops following the preceding nasal of the non-future classifier subjects. The bilabial glides surface in predicating nominal expressions (see §6.1.4).
for slots 3 and 9. This is a competition with winners and losers. We shall see that what may go into each of these number marking slots (3 and 9) is hierarchically governed.

As we saw in examples 6.32 and 6.33, dual non-sibling number markers in slot 3, act in concert with classifier subject pronominals to specify a subject argument as dual non-sibling. However when a singular or plural object pronominal occupies slot 3, the dual non-sibling number marker gets shunted down to the only other available slot in the template (9) for morphemes of this type (see example 6.46 and also example 6.3, p. 100). Thus object pronominals are higher ranked fillers of slot 3 than number markers that specify subjects.

6.46 (2004-07-04)B01, 0429.832

*Non’gunginth the pana thuringayitjmaninginth nguwuminggi*

“Why don’t you two (non-siblings, at least one of whom is female) tell me that story about that totem site?”

However if the object argument is itself dual or paucal sibling, then the number markers specifying both subjects and objects will be in competition for the second of the two slots (9). In these cases, the object specifying number markers win out over their subject specifying counterparts (as in example 6.47).

6.47 (2004-08)B03b, 711934_712677

*Mamngarrungime*

“The two boys said to us.”

(Literally: “One or two people said to us few non-siblings (at least one of whom is female”).

In the narrative from which example 6.47 was extracted, the subject referent of the verb *mamngarrungime* is dual masculine non-sibling, two young boys to be precise. Ordinarily, one would expect such a subject to be expressed by the combination of a “singular” (dual/singular) subject and the dual masculine non-sibling number marker, *nintha*. In this case, *nintha*’s preferred slot (3) is blocked by the “daucal” direct object *narru*. Its second option, slot 9, is also blocked by the paucal feminine non-sibling number marker *ngime*, which in this case is specifying the “daucal” direct object as actually paucal and not dual. This leaves *nintha* with no
place to go. The verbal template has no further slots available for marking the subject as specifically dual. The resulting form, mamngarrungime, is the same as the form we would expect for a genuine singular subject (e.g., “he/she said to us”).

Recall that subject arguments that are grammatically paucal non-sibling, are ordinarily expressed as such through the joint effort of a “daucal” classifier subject and a paucal non-sibling number marker. The paucal non-sibling number marker has only the one available slot in the template, slot 9. If the object argument is either dual or paucal non-sibling, then in competition for slot 9, the number marker specifying the object also wins out over the number marker specifying the subject (as in example 6.48).

Example 6.48 was elicited. What I asked for was “We three females will talk to you two males”. Because the speaker who produced 6.48 was a woman, we would expect the subject of the verb to have been ngan’gungime, first person paucal exclusive feminine non-siblings. That fact that the paucal non-sibling number marker -ngime, has been blocked from slot 9 by the indirect object specifying -ninha, leaves the daucal subject grammatically underspecified for both number and gender. If the subject referent were to have been paucal masculine, the form of the verb would have been identical because a paucal masculine non-sibling number marker would also be blocked from slot 9. If the subject referent were to have been dual sibling, the form would also have been identical. We see then that in terms of competition for slot 9, number markers specifying objects rank higher than those specifying subjects.

In competition for the slot 3, the other regular casualty is the daucal non-future subject number marker -Ga. This morpheme has only the one slot available in the main verb (slot 3), which is the same slot that the object pronominals take. In example 6.49, -Ga loses out to the daucal direct object -wun’gu. In Murriny Patha, the subject of a serial verb is necessarily co-referential with the subject of the main verb. In the serial verb, -Ga is retained in slot 12, because -Ga is the only possible filler of this
Because this particular example is a serial verb construction, we know from the -Ga in slot 12 that the non-singular subject is not expressing a plural referent. However in spite of this, we can’t be sure whether the referent is dual sibling or paucal non-sibling. If it is paucal non-sibling, the subject specifying paucal non-sibling number marker, being a more lowly ranked filler, will lose out in competition for slot 9 to the object specifying number marker -ngime.

6.49 (JB2005FN4, 15)

puddanbun'gurlarldeyidangimepumban'ga

```
puddan -wun'gu -rlarl -deyida -ngime =pumban -Ga
3NSS.29.NFUT-3DAUCDO-drop_people_off -in_turn -PAUC.F.NSIB =3NSS.6go.NFUT -DAUC.NFUT
CSP -DO -COV -adv -NUM =SERCSP -NUM
1 3 6 8 9 11 12
```

“They (PAUC.F.NSIB/PAUC.M.NSIB/DU.SIB) are dropping them (PAUC.F.NSIB) off, one after the other, as they go along.”

In terms of slot hierarchy, the final point of consideration is which of the object pronominal series ranks most highly. Ditransitive verbs with morphologically zero direct object arguments (i.e., ones that express either non-human or third singular human referents) generally express goal or recipient with an indirect object argument, the indirect object pronominal being the filler of slot 3 (as in example 6.50).

6.50 (2004-08-08JB03b, 310640_311801)

pumamngarrubertingintha

```
pumam -ngarru -berti -ngintha
3NSS.8say/do.NFUT -1DAUC.EXIO -take -DU.F.NSIB
CSP -IO -COV -NUM
1 3 6 9
```

“They brought her to see us two.”

However non-zero direct objects take slot 3 in preference to indirect objects. This generally leaves goals and recipients to be expressed externally to the verb, by a prepositional phrase (as in example 6.51).

6.51 (2004-07-04JB01, 1556.001)

Nangiberti ngarra ku bamam dakta.

```
a -ngi -berti ngarra ku bamam dakta
2S.8say/do.FUT -1sDO -take LOC animate white doctor
CSP -DO -COV PREP NOMCL adj noun
1 3 6
```

“They take me to the (European) doctor.”

125 It should be pointed out that serial verb constructions convey aspectual information and in this example, it also conveys movement along the ground. The fact that in this case it also delimits the denotation of the subject of the main verb is incidental to its aspectual and motional semantics. Similar non-future daucal subject verbs with perfective aspect (that is, without a serial verb) are not so easily disambiguated (as in example 6.50).
We can represent the ranking of slots 3 and 9 thus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Object pronominals</td>
<td>Object specifying number markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Object pronominals</td>
<td>(-ninthna, -nginthna, -name/-name, -ngime)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject specifying number markers</td>
<td>(-ninthna, -nginthna, -Ga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject specifying number markers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Filler hierarchy for the number marking slots 3 and 9.

6.1.3.5 Ethical datives
Murriny Patha has a third, seemingly incomplete paradigm of “object” pronominals. The ethical dative series of pronominals is no longer fully productive. This series of pronominals mark participants adversely affected by some course of action expressed in the verb. In example 6.52, the speaker’s grandfather is left behind at a place called Nangu by the speaker’s father’s aunt, whose nickname was Pinggarlma (the grandfather’s wife). In this case, the first person singular ethical dative -ngantha expresses the speaker’s displeasure about this particular event. In example 6.53, the third person singular ethical dative -nginthna expresses how a woman is adversely affected by the rise in her blood pressure, blood being the subject of the verb.

6.52 (2004-09-12JB04, 0059.993)
*Nangu kanamngantha part kanggurl ngay pinggarlma.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nangu</th>
<th>kanam</th>
<th>-ngantha</th>
<th>part</th>
<th>kanggurl</th>
<th>=ngay</th>
<th>pinggarlma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>place_name</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-ED</td>
<td>-COV</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>=PRO noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S.4 be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Pinggarlma, my father’s auntie, left him behind at Nangu, which displeased me.”

6.53 (2004-07-04JB01, 2585.521)
*Kumulung dimardewitjnginthna*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kumulung</th>
<th>dim</th>
<th>-mardewitj</th>
<th>-nginthna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>3S.1 sit</td>
<td>NFUT</td>
<td>go_up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-COV</td>
<td>-ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“She’s got high blood pressure”

The ethical datives differ from the other two object series in that they may fill either slot 3 (as in 6.52) or slot 9 (as in 6.53) of the verbal template. This variable distribution, coupled with the fact that two members of this series (-ninthna, 3smED and -nginthna, 3sfED) are homophonous with the dual non-sibling number markers,
which also happen to be fillers of slots 3 and 9, point to this series of pronominals being the historical source for the two dual non-sibling number markers.126

6.1.4 Vouns and nerbs
As we saw in §6.1.3.1 and §6.1.3.4, it can be difficult in verbs to disentangle arguments and predicates. The situation gets further complicated by the existence of a range of word forms that fall intermediately between prototypical nominals and prototypical verbs. Walsh (1996b) coined the names “vouns” and “nerbs” to describe two intermediate Murriny Patha word classes that exhibit properties of both nouns and verbs. The two constructions take nominal roots, usually nouns or adjectives, as well as certain morphology that is elsewhere associated with the polysynthetic verb. Walsh proposed the name “nerbs” to describe the more noun-like variety and “vouns” to describe the variety that is more verb-like. Nerbs are effectively one-place predicates. Like regular nominals, they often take a nominal classifier127, but like verbs, they regularly incorporate body parts. Moreover, it is one of the “object” pronominal series (usually the direct object series) that expresses a stative or experiencer subject, thus attributing the properties of the nominal to a referent.

6.54 (2004-07-04B01, 1731.969)
kardu darrimurnngingini, mere ngulatj nandji tjithay.

```
kardu darrimurn -ngi -ngini mere ngul -atj nandji tjithay
human sand/sugar -1S'DO' -body not 1S$31.FUT -eat residue honey
NOMCL noun -SS -IBP NEG CSP -COV NOMCL noun
```

“I am diabetic, I can’t eat honey.”

In example 6.54, the stative subject of the expression kardu darrimurnngingini, is expressed by the first person singular “direct object” pronominal, -ngi. The speaker thus refers to herself as a person whose body has a problem with processing sugars. The pronominal -ngi should not be thought of as an object. This series of pronominals, which express stative and experiencer subjects in nerbs, is the same

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126 Note that the verb dimar dewitjngintha in 6.53 differs structurally from those examples where the number markers -nintha and -ngintha occur in slot 9, in that the number markers only ever occur in this position when there is an overt filler of slot 3 (i.e., when -nintha and -ngintha specify object number, such as 6.42, or when they specify subject number such as in 6.46), whereas in dimar dewitjngintha slot 3 remains empty.

See Blythe (in press) for a historical account of the reanalysis -nintha and -ngintha as number markers.

127 I don’t wish to imply that the presence of a nominal classifier is any sort of diagnostic for word class. We saw in examples 6.6, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.13 that verbs, like nouns and adjectives, are regularly preceded by a bare nominal classifier. However in the case of nerbs, a nominal classifier specifies the nominal root in terms of the referent’s membership within a nominal class.
series as the verbal direct object series. Note that in impersonal verbs, the direct object also expresses experiencer (as in example 6.37).

Similar constructions are even more common in the Kimberley language Kija than they are in Murriny Patha. In the Kija example (6.55), the first person non-singular inclusive enclitic =yuwu expresses the stative subject as “we inclusive”. This series of pronominal clitics commonly occur in verbs, where they generally have a benefactive reading (Blythe 2001: 52-55; Kofod ms: 69-79).

6.55 Kija example (Blythe 2001: 54)
Nguwan wanyakinyuwu
nguwan wanyaki -n =yuwu
NEG child -STAT =1NS.EX
“We (exclusive) are not children”.

In Murriny Patha, rather than with the existential negators ma- and manangga- (see §6.1.2.1), these expressions are negated with the predicational negator mere128 (as in example 6.56).

6.56 (2004-08-08)B03b, 368223_370643)
kuguk dangatha mere pathangi.
kuguk dangatha mere patha -ngi
wait still not good -1s‘DO’
INTERJ adv NEG adj -SS
“Wait a minute I don’t feel well.”

The direct object series of pronominals is not the only series to be found in nerbs. The no-longer fully productive series of ethical dative pronominals marks adversely affected experiencer subjects (example 6.57). In my data, this series of pronominals surfaces more often in nerbs than in verbs.

6.57 (JB2005FNI, 43)
kardu ninggeninggepathaninha
kardu ninggeningge -patha -nintha
human jealous -INTENS -3SMED
NOMCL NROOT -adv -ES
“He’s very consumed by jealousy”.

In fact nerbs, like polysynthetic verbs, exhibit considerable structural complexity. In a manner reminiscent of what we saw in verbs, dual and paucal non-sibling arguments

128 As well as negating verbs, “nerbs” and “vouns”, mere also negates non-existential nominal predications:
Yawu mere pirdukpirduk panayu.
yawu mere pirdukpirduk pana -yu.
Hey not striated_pardalote that.you.know -DUB
INTERJ NEG noun DEM -PART
“Hey, that’s not a striated pardalote!” (2004-09-12)B04, 638127_640063)
are marked in two places through the joint effort of an “object” pronominal and a non-sibling number marker (e.g., -wun’gu + -ngintha in example 6.58). As well as incorporating body part nouns, nerbs also incorporate adverbials (such as -patha in example 6.57).

6.58 (JB2005FN5, 10)
kardu thawatjwun’gumengintha
kardu thawatj -wun’gu -me -ngintha
human slow -3DAUCDO -foot -DU.F.NSIB
NOMCL adj -SS -IBP -NUM
“The two non-siblings at least one of whom is female are slow.”

Walsh’s “vouns” are even more verb-like than nerbs. In fact, they basically are class 8 verbs with a procliticized nominal root (e.g., example 6.59).

6.59 (JB2004FN1, 51)
durdumamardanukunngurru
durdum= ma -marda -nukun =ngurru
shortwind= 1S.8_do.FUT -stomach -FUTIMP =1S.6.go.FUT
NROOT= CSP -IBP -TNS =SER.CSP
“I might become short of breath.”

Unlike nerbs, vouns are not restricted to being one place predicates. They may be transitive as in example 6.60.

6.60 (2004-09-12)JB04, 0418.846)
kardu ngay pakpakmemadhangardiyu
kardu ngay pakpak= me -ma -dha =ngardi -yu
human 1s weak/tired= 1S.S.do.PSTIMP -hand -PST =1S.4_be.PSTIMP -??
NOMCL PRO NROOT= CSP -IBP -TNS =SER.CSP -PART
“I couldn’t handle her (I was too young).”

There is mounting evidence to suggest that both vouns and nerbs may be relics of an earlier stage of the language, or of an ancestral language, that had a phrasal verb structure comprising an initial coverb followed by an inflecting verb, a pattern that is common throughout the area (McGregor 2002: 106; Schultze-Berndt 2000). In fact Reid (2003) convincingly demonstrates that neighbouring Ngan’gityemerri’s synthetic structure is derived from an earlier phrasal verb structure with much freer coverb-inflecting verb ordering. By examining Gerhardt Laves’ fieldnotes from 1930, Reid shows that Ngan’gimerri (a now extinct dialect of Ngan’gityemerri) frequently allowed initial coverbs. In the same volume129, Green (2003), on the basis of reconstructions of inflecting verb paradigms, shows that Ngan’gityemerri and

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129 Evans (2003c).
Murriny Patha are closely related and together constitute the Southern Daly language family. On this basis, the two papers would be at odds with each other if Murriny Patha were shown not to have followed a similar reanalysis of its verbal structure. On the contrary, there are a number of clues suggesting that pre-Murriny Patha (or perhaps proto-Southern Daly) also allowed initial coverbs. The nominal roots that characterize both nouns and verbs, may be vestiges of these earlier initial coverbs. One source of evidence for such a proposal comes from the large number of adjectives in Murriny Patha that end in -*mam*. *Mam* is also the third person singular, non-future form of the class 8 verb “say/do (with hands)”, the same verb that characterizes nouns. There are a number of coverbs in the modern language that strongly correlate with these adjectives ending in -*mam*. These adjectives appear to be relics from that earlier stage of the language. That is, they appear to be “frozen” class 8 verbs that preserve the previous coverb-inflecting verb ordering (i.e., #*letet mam*, “it is sticking to it”, rather than mam*letet*, which we see today).

A second clue comes from the form pakpakmampunme “they (pl) had tired feet” (example 6.61). By alternatively conceiving of the adjectival root, the form is analysable synchronically as both as a noun (6.61a) and a verb (as an impersonal[131] noun to be precise) (6.61b).

**6.61 (Street & Street 1989)**

a. *Pakpakmampunme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pakpakmam</th>
<th>-wun</th>
<th>-me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tired</td>
<td>-3PLDO</td>
<td>-foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NROOT</td>
<td>-SS</td>
<td>-IBP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“They (pl) had tired feet.”

b. *Pakpakmampunme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pakpak=mam</th>
<th>-wun</th>
<th>-me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tired=</td>
<td>3S8_do.nFut</td>
<td>-3PLDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NROOT=</td>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>-DO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“They (pl) had tired feet.”

(Literally: “It gave them tired feet”.)

A third clue shows that the supposed adjectives ending in -*mam* (e.g., dertemam, “hard”), are not as frozen as they might seem. In fact, they may be treated synchronically as being underlyingly both verbs (e.g., dertemam-O, hard-3sDO, “it is hard”) and nouns (dertem=mam, hard=3S_8do.nFut, “it is hard”). Whilst this is not very obvious in the third person, for the second person, there exist both “nerbal” (example 6.62) and “vounal” (example 6.63) predication strategies. The “vounal”

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[130] For example, *tjipmam* “black”, cf. -*tjipmarda* (class 22) “have/wear something black”; *bamam* “white”, cf. -*baybay* (class 22) “carry/wear something white”; *werlerlmam* “crooked”, cf. -*werlerl* (class 23) “be dried up/shrivelled”; *tjingtjingmam* “hairy”, cf. -*yingtjingtjing* (class 8) “be dried up/shrivelled”; *yitmam*, “heavy with pain”, cf. -*yit* (class 8) “be dried up/shrivelled”, *letetmam* “sticky”, cf. -*letet* (class 8) “stick it/stick to it”.

[131] See §6.1.3.2.
strategy results in a replacement of the “adjectival” -mam with a second person singular class 8 verb form nam.

6.62 (JB2004FN, 91)
Dertemamnyidhay.
dertemam -nym -dhay
hard -2sDO -mouth
NROOT -DO -IBP
“You’re a hard person (you’re always say ‘no’ to requests).”

6.63 (JB2004FN, 89)
kardu dertenanthay
kardu derte= nam -dhay
human hard= 2sS8do.NFUT -mouth
NOMCL NROOT= CSP -IBP
“You are a hard person (you’re always saying ‘no’ to requests).”

A fourth clue comes from the fact that all of the attested vouns lack any lexical suffixes corresponding to slot 6 in the modern verbal template (recall that the modern coverb consists of two subslots: IBP, slot 5 and Lex, slot 6).132 Vouns then appear to be relics from a stage of the language that had a two-part structure consisting of an initial lexical coverb and an inflecting verb. In this structure, the incorporated body part would have been part of the inflecting verb and would have occurred to the right of the subject and object marking pronominals, more or less where it is today. The adjective yurryurrmamka, “sharp eyed” (6.64), perfectly preserves such a structure.133

6.64 (Street & Street 1989)
*yurryurr mamka
yurryurr mam -ngGa
Coverb 3sS8.NFUT -eye/face
“He/she/it is sharp-eyed”.

This exactly parallels the structural changes proposed by Reid for Ngan’gityemerri. In becoming a polysynthetic structure, the initial coverb becomes a lexical root occurring to the right of the incorporated body part. In the modern language, both morphemes, along with various applicatives and divisives (not found in Murriny Patha), constitute an internally complex coverb, reminiscent of the morphologically complex coverb that we see in modern Murriny Patha.

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132 See Figure 6.1.
133 The velar nasal of the incorporated body part -ngGa eye/face is regularly deleted following a preceding nasal (Street 1987: 110).
6.1.5 The humanity of Murriny Patha morphosyntax
As we have seen, the verbal morphosyntax is geared towards distinguishing between groups of human participants. Features such as person, number, gender and siblinghood are very human qualities. In fact, with such a powerful group of relationships, it is not surprising that the language has only the one nominal classifier for humans (*kardu*). The flipside is that non-human entities (which are not so readily distinguished with these very human attributes) are distinguished by the nine remaining nominal classes.

Murriny Patha verbal morphosyntax places prominence on the relationships between human participants. Sociality is the backbone of the referential system. Seemingly, the language has verbally grammaticalized the most human qualities and downplayed all else. Person (as in, current speakers, recipients and others), number (as in, a single person, groups of two people, groups of three or more, etc.), gender (as males and females) and siblinghood are all social categories. The interrelatedness of these categories for referential efficacy displays the importance placed on social relationships. It is humans that speak to each other. It is humans that are in kinship relations to each other, and that interact with each other (whether that be singularly or in groups of two, few or many). Everything else is either *ku* (animate), *mi* (vegetable), *kura* (water), *thunggu* (fire), *thamul* (spears), *tju* (strikers), *da* (places/time), *murriny* (language) or *nandji* (the rest). The prominence placed on qualities attributable to humans goes a long way towards explaining the lack of agreement for non-human arguments. As a general rule of thumb, all non-human arguments are expressed in the verb by 3rd person singular pronominals, regardless of whether the entities in question are in fact single or multiple.

In example 6.65 *nandji palyirr*, “stones” are coreferential with the classifier subject of the verb *kemkadhu*, “it exists”; yet clearly they do not agree in terms of number. At the time, the speaker was sitting inside a circle of about twenty stones; yet morphologically the subject of the verb is singular. So although the basic rule of
thumb might be “if human – agree, if not – don’t bother agreeing”; there are some exceptions.

Street (1980a: 5, 7) notes that dogs are sometimes expressed through an object pronominal. My own data also shows that dogs may agree in terms of number, with the verbal arguments that express them. For instance, in example 6.66, were, “dog”, gets its number specification purely from the subject argument (the CSP mem + the number marker -ninth). As such the dogs themselves are individuated.

6.66 (JB2004FN1, 7)

were memninthatha

were mem -ninth -tha
dog 3sS.10.NFUT -D.U.M.NSIB -chase_e/o
noun CSP -NUM -COV
1 3 6

“The two dogs chased each other around.”

6.67 (JB2004FN1, 35)

ku were ngurdanthurkthuknem ngarra da

ku were ngurdan -dhukthuk =ngem ngarra da
animate dog 1sS.29.NFUT -send =1sS.1.sit.NFUT LOC home
NOMCL noun CSP -COV =SER.CSP PREP noun
1 6 11

“I’m sending the dogs home.”

By contrast, in example 6.67, slot 3 is empty. For non-singular human patients, one would expect an overt direct object pronominal to fill this slot. Rather than mark the plurality of the dogs through a direct object pronominal, the coverb -dhukthuk is reduplicated, which is a regular strategy for marking plurality of non-human objects (Street 1980a). Because slot 3 is empty, the group of dogs are treated as if they were a singular entity, in much the same way as if the sender were sending home any other non-human entity: money, food, spears etc.

Overt nominal non-human arguments that agree in number with the verbal morphology are very rare in my corpus. In fact there is only one in the transcribed corpus of talk-in-interaction.

6.68 Wurltjirri (2005-07-15JB04b, 826856_829184)

Awu wurltjirri wurrinininthadhala malgarrin

awu wurltjirri wurrinininthadha malgarrin
no ceremonial_tradition 3sS.6 -D.U.M.NSIB -PST ceremonial_tradition
INTERJ noun CSP -NUM -PST noun

“No, wurltjirri and malgarrin were going along together (that is, at the same time)”.

134 The predicted form would be ngurdan-win-dhukthuk=ngem, 1sS.29.NFUT-3PLO-send=1sS.1.sit.NFUT, “I’m sending them.”
135 The dog examples in 6.66 and 6.67 were elicited.
In example 6.68, the two ceremonial traditions *wurltjirri* and *malgarrin* constitute the subject of the verb *wurrinininhadha*, literally: “the two male non-siblings were going along”. Wurltjirri and malgarrin, as performance genres, both belong to the *nandji* class, which is the residue class. The utterance was produced as part of a discussion about which of the two genres predated the other. Effectively, the utterance states that both wurltjirri and malgarrin were being performed at the same time. However the utterance is constructed in such a way as to underscore the very human qualities of malgarrin and wurltjirri and their importance for humans. Both are important autochthonous performance genres, performed exclusively by Murriny Patha people (albeit rarely these days). In both cases, songs are handed over to a composer in a dream, usually by the spirit of a deceased Murriny Patha person. Such dreams generally include instructions on how the songs should be performed. Wurltjirri and malgarrin are entities that deal with the sorts of activities that humans need to do. In a way, they have human qualities and human attributes that transcend those of the dancers, singers and composers that bring them into fruition. A construction like the one in example 6.68 personifies the genres themselves, giving them the volition to go along together, to be performed together; as if that’s what happened because that’s what wurltjirri and malgarrin wanted to happen.  

The question of volition may not be irrelevant to examples 6.66 and 6.67 either. Note that in 6.66 the two dogs chased each other around, whereas in 6.67 they are being sent home. The dogs in 6.66 are presented as have having minds of their own and as interacting with each other, whereas in 6.67 they are treated as something to send home collectively (regardless of what the individual dogs might feel about it).

Agreement may be something that speakers choose to manipulate for pragmatic effect, so as to enhance or downplay the human qualities of various non-human entities. In this light, a speaker might apply the rule of thumb thus: “If the non-human referent that I have in mind I conceive of as a group of individual participants, rather than a group of entities, and I want the hearers of my talk to similarly conceive of the referent as participating participants, I’ll treat the referent as human and make it agree

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136 Evans (2002: 21) notes a similar usage in Bininj Gun-wok. He discusses an example where certain birds, which being animates would ordinarily take 3rd singular subjects, are personified by taking a third person plural subject. The theme of the narrative from which the example was taken was how birds care for their young – caring for young also being a very human attribute.
accordingly. If not, I’ll treat the referent as a group of non-participating entities and I won’t make it agree in terms of number.”

In Murriny Patha formal narratives, there exists a third person collective singular for human participants, which tends to mean “all of them”. It is used in conjunction with the regular third person plural, and in my corpus is never used for the first mention of the group of people in question. First mentions of group activity are always third person plural (as with pirrinidhayu in the second line of Fragment 26).

Fragment 26 (2005-08-06 JB04, 37.856, 67.902)
1 *Murrinyka ngurdyiŋnuŋa marraŋguthuka Ngurde*
murriny -ka ngurdu -yitj -nu -ka marra -re -gathu -ka ngurde
speech -TOP 1SS.30 FUT -tell_story-FUT -TOP new -TEMP -towards -TOP place_name
NOMCL -PART CSP -COV -TNS -PART adj -SUF -PART -PART noun
“The story about Ngurde I’m going to tell comes from the very beginning of time.”

2 *Da ngurdegathu pirrinidhayu*
da ngurde -gathu pirrini -dha -yu
place/time Pl.NAME -towards 3PLS.1 sit PSTIMF -PST -??
NOMCL noun -PART CSP -COV -TNS -PART
“They went towards Ngurde.”

3 *Kardu terert*
kardu terert
human many
NOMCL adj
“Lots of people.”

4 *yi thamul beparldhadinika kerdengbe*
yi thamul be -parl -dha =dini -ka kerdengbe
and spear 3SS.14 PSTIMF -break -PST =3SS.1 sit PSTIMF -TOP Pl.NAME
conj NOMCL CSP -COV -TNS =SER CSP -PART noun
“And they were breaking [bamboo] to make spears at Kerdengbe.”

5 *wurrinigathu ngurderda parnawup*
wurrini -gathu ngurde -rda parnam -wup
3SS.6 go PSTIMF -towards Pl.NAME LOC 3PLS.4 be N Fut -live
CSP -PART noun -SUF CSP -COV
“They went towards Ngurde and lived there.”

6 *nandji wurltjirri napurrkthadini bere*
nandji wurltjirri na -purrk -tha =dini bere
residue ceremonial_tradition 3SS.7 go PSTIMF -dance -PST =3SS.1 sit PSTIMF finish
NOMCL noun CSP -COV -TNS =SER CSP INTERJ
“They were dancing Wurltjirri, then…”

7 *punnidha ngurde ngamimardagathu*
punni -dha ngurde ngamimarda -gathu
3PLS.7 go PSTIMF -PST Pl.NAME otherside -towards
CSP -TNS noun noun -PART
“They went to the other side of Ngurde.”
In Fragment 26, the verbs *beparldhadinika*, “they were breaking” (line 4), *wurrinigathu*, “they went towards” (line 5) and *napurrkthadini*, “they were dancing” (line 6) are all collective singular references. It is unclear how the semantics of these verbs differ from the third person plural references. Like the third person plural verbs, each of these collective singular verbs portrays collective actions of the ancestors. For individuated ancestors, verbs tend to agree in terms of person and number (Fragment 27, the same narrative).

Fragment 27 (2005-08-06)B04, 151.573_162.593
37 *karduwathu warda wurrininginthadha bere wurdamnginthamatjka ku warda*

kardu -gathu warda wurrinni -nginthath -dha bere 
NOMCL -PART warda wurra -nginthath -dha 
human -FOC after that 3SS.6_go.PSTIMP -DU.F.NSIB -PST finish 
CSP -NUM -TNS INTERJ 

wurdam -nginthath -matj -ka ku warda 
3SS.30.FUT -DU.F.NSIB -turn_into -TOP animate then 
CSP -NUM -COV -PART NOMCL adv 

“After that the two of them [Mr & Mrs Long-neck Tortoise] were going. Then they turned into animals.”

38 *ku ngirnu warda wurranninginthamardawitj kanyi*

ku ngirnu warda wurra -nginthai -mardawitj kanyi 
NOMCL noun modal CSP -NUM -COV DEM 
animate long-necked_tortoise then 3SS.6_go.NFUT -DU.F.NSIB -ascend PROX 

“Then the two long-necked tortoises went up here.”

Note that in *wurranninginthamardawitj*, “the two non-siblings went up” (line 38), agreement is maintained, even after the two ancestors have turned into animals. Even if they are technically no longer humans, they are still husband and wife, which are very human attributes.

The third person collective singular only appears in my corpus in *da marrare* stories (creation myths). It is possible that its use might be more widespread, however at this point I conclude that it is a formal stylistic device that is specific to this genre and may be characteristic of the verbal art. Be that as it may, its occurrence is further restricted to deeds of faceless unindividuated ancestors, who act collectively. Perhaps therefore the rule of thumb: “if human – agree, otherwise don’t”; still applies even here. Narrators may choose to make their verbs agree or not agree, based on whether they wish to portray specific referents as cognizant, individuated, participating

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137 Although interesting, this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation, because the third person collective singular is thus far unattested in talk-in-interaction, as opposed to formal narratives.
participants whose deeds should be remembered, or faceless generic entities that behave collectively.

6.2 The locus of reference

Due to the fusional morphology in Murriny Patha verbs (CSP, SERCSP and the non-sibling number markers), multiple semantic categories are conveyed by single portmanteau morphemes. By contrast, as we saw in §6.1.3.1 and §6.1.3.4, the marking of number for verbal subject arguments and verbal object arguments (respectively) is the result of the conjoint effort of the fillers of multiple slots in the verbal template. In this respect, multiple morphemes effectively mark a single semantic category. The upshot of this is that bound pronominals\textsuperscript{138} in their own right do not correspond to grammatical arguments and neither do the number markers. However, pronominals and number markers are interdependent when it comes to expressing grammatical arguments, even when the number marking slots are empty. When it comes to asking what is being denoted, slots 1, 3, 9 and sometimes 11 and 12 (if the verb is a serial construction) all need to be considered. They all have a role to play in person reference.

We have also seen that sometimes the information packaged in the verb impacts on the referential interpretation of overt nominal expressions and vice versa. With regard to conveying semantic roles, there is often a high degree of interdependence between polysynthetic verbs and overt nominals, particularly because the verbal template is limited to expressing just two grammatical arguments (as we saw in §6.1.3). An individual clause may have semantic information coming from several different word types which all contribute towards the task of referring; some of which also take on the additional task of predicating. This raises some tricky questions for an interactional study of person reference; particularly, “What sort of units do denoting expressions correspond to?”; “Is it practicable to separate reference from predication when discussing expressions that are implicated in referring?” and, “How do coreferential expressions jointly contribute towards making a referent identifiable for a speaker?”

In order to tackle these problems, it will be useful to look at an example where these various interdependencies surface. Thus I will attempt to map out the contributions of the various parts towards their ultimate task of making a referent

\textsuperscript{138} CSP, SERCSP, DO, IO, ED.
identifiable. In so doing, we will benefit from an approach that considers semantic information to filter down through a multi-layered structure.139 Let us consider example 6.69, which comes from a creation myth about two old women who drowned in some quicksand. When they went missing, an old man went to search for them. This is the initial reference to the old man and a subsequent reference to the two women.

6.69 (2004-08-13)B02, 0064.289)

Kardu ngalantharr dirran’guwintharrarrthanginthakardi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kardu</th>
<th>ngalantharr</th>
<th>dirra</th>
<th>-n'gu</th>
<th>-wintharrarr</th>
<th>-dha</th>
<th>-ngintha</th>
<th>=kardi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>old man</td>
<td>3S5.28.PST</td>
<td>-3DAUCDO</td>
<td>-seek</td>
<td>-PST</td>
<td>-DU,F.NSB =3S.4.PST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The old man was looking around for the two females who weren’t sisters.”
(Literally: “The old man was looking around for two non-siblings, at least one of whom was female.”)

With regards to identifying denoting expressions, the English translation of 6.69 is relatively straightforward. Because English verbs have only vestigial agreement morphology, the contribution of was looking around towards reference would usually be ignored by most analysts. This is because the language is not pro-drop and the information specifying gender and number in the verb (in this case, the auxiliary was, 3s) is generally redundant (cf. “the old man”). The two noun phrases, the old man and the two females who weren’t sisters, are both denoting expressions. The first is identifiable as the subject argument and the second is an oblique argument. The former expresses the “agent” role and the later expresses “goal”. Based on their respective denotata, would-be hearers should be able to pick out two referents, a “seeker” and a “sought-after”.140

However in case of the Murriny Patha clause, we have two expressions that the speaker recruits for referring: a nominal expression kardu ngalantharr, “old (Aboriginal) man”, and a verbal expression, dirran’guwintharrarrthanginthakardi, “he/she was looking for the two non-siblings, at least one of whom was female”. In this clause, the semantic role of “goal” is expressed by a direct object argument which is morphosyntactically encoded exclusively within the polysynthetic verb. On the

139 Although I am not adhering to any particular syntactic framework, I assume a unification approach; whereby elements that are discontiguous within the constituent structure become unified within the functional structure.
140 Note that the oblique referent encompasses two participants – the two women (as “sought-after”). The domain of separation between discourse-dependent “referents” and “worldly” participants will be taken up in §10.3.
other hand, the semantic role of “agent” is expressed by the subject argument which is morphosyntactically expressed both within and externally to the verb. Somehow these two arguments make two referents identifiable – the “seeker” and the “sought-after” – yet how does the relevant information filter through to the hearer?

As we saw in §6.1.3.4, the third person daucal direct object pronominal -n’gu (slot 3) plus the dual feminine non-sibling number marker -ngintha (slot 9) jointly contribute the semantic information (person, number, gender and “siblinghood”) required to give the verb a “third person dual feminine non-sibling direct object” argument (see Figure 6.2).

![Figure 6.2](image)

Figure 6.2 The direct object pronominal and the dual non-sibling number marker jointly denote the direct object denotatum. It is from this denoted set that the hearer needs to select the referent (the two old women, as “sought after”).

Because there are no co-referential nominals specifying “object” arguments, this information alone makes the goal identifiable (a pair of non-siblings, at least one of whom is female, not the speaker, not the hearer, as “sought-after”). This is the information that is required by the hearer to pick out the referent. Any hearer of this story would easily pick out the two women who drowned because prior to this utterance, they had already been referred to as kardu kunugunu perrken’gu, “two old women”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal expression</th>
<th>Verbal expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kardu ngalantharr</td>
<td>dirran’guwinharrarrhanginthakardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human old man</td>
<td>dirra -n’gu -wintharrarr -dha -ngintha =kardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NomCl noun</td>
<td>CSP -DO -COV -TNS -NUM =SERCSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kardu ngalantharr</td>
<td>3SS.2B.PST -3DAUCDO -seek -PST -DU.F.NSIB =3SS.4.PST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>3 6 7 9 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The direct object pronominal -n’gu, 3DAUCDO, is no more a denoting expression than -ngintha, DU.F.NSIB. On their own, neither conveys sufficient information to specify the goal, thus neither makes a complete contribution towards denoting the above denotatum. Both fillers of these two slots make an equal contribution towards the task of denotation. The contributions of these two fillers are unified as the “direct object” argument of the verb. It is this direct object that handles the task of denotation.

On the other hand, the way that the subject of this clause is expressed is more complex (see Figure 6.3). The verbal subject argument (third person “singular” subject) is expressed in two places by the CSP (dirra, slot 1) and by the SERCSP (=kardi, slot 11). However the verbal subject carries no information about gender and doesn’t indicate who (or even what) was looking for the two women. This information comes exclusively from the nominal group, kardu ngalantharr, “(living Aboriginal) old man”. However, this nominal subject carries no information about its actually being a subject. There is no case marking. There is no marking of person or number. In this example, there are no grammatical categories that “agree” with the verbal subject. The hearer must work it out for himself that “the old man” corresponds to the subject of the verb and should not be construed as one of the two non-siblings. Thus, these nominal and verbal subjects are completely interdependent. Together they jointly contribute the semantic information necessary to identify the agent role (an old man, alive, not the speaker, not the hearer, as “seeker”). Their respective contributions are unified at the functional level “subject”. Together they constitute the subject argument of the clause. It is this bundled information that the

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141 Recall from §6.1.3.4 that due to the hierarchy of slot-fillers (Table 10), when object arguments are either dual or paucal non-sibling, dual non-sibling subjects lose their place in slot 9 to the object-marking number-markers, leaving them nowhere else to go. Thus, although we know that CSP and SERCSP are morphologically “singular” (=singular/dual), we don’t know for sure whether the subject argument is semantically singular or dual non-sibling. If it were dual non-sibling, the subject specifying number marker would be effectively blocked by the direct object-marking number marker, -ngintha. However, the subsequent line of the narrative reveals that the story really was about one old man and not two.

142 The nominal classifier kardu marks the old man as Aboriginal and amongst the living, whereas ku ngalantharr would be a deceased old man or perhaps, a non-Aboriginal old man.

143 Taken in isolation, the utterance could potentially be construed as “someone/something was looking for the old man and his wife”, where “the old man” is construable as one of the two participants expressed by the dual feminine non-sibling argument. This would be the inclusory construction. However, given the prior mention of the two women as kardu kunugunu perrken’gu, “two old women”, this inclusory reading for “old man” may be rendered so unlikely as to be practically defeasible.
hearer requires in order to pick out the referent that the speaker has in mind (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 A layered representation of example 6.69, showing the flow of relevant semantic information that the hearer needs to pick out the two referents.
Figure 6.4 The “functional domain of reference” is the set of all “potential referents” that are expressible by grammatical functions. They are to grammatical functions what denotata are to denoting expressions. The “functional domain of reference” for the subject of the clause in 6.69 is the intersection of the verbal subject denotatum and the nominal subject denotatum. It is from this restricted set that the hearer must pick out the referent that they believe the speaker has in mind.

Although one wouldn’t wish to hang the term “denotatum” from the functional subject argument (because the term “denotatum” pertains to denoting expressions which are constituent-level constructs), this unified parcel of information effectively constitutes the semantic locus of reference. Like the denotatum of a denoting expression (the set of all possible entities to which the sense of the expression is applicable) this “functional domain of reference” can be thought of as the set of all possible entities to which this unified parcel of semantic content is applicable. The subject argument (see Figure 6.4) actually represents the pooled semantic content that the hearer requires in order to pick out the subject referent. This is the information that the hearer gleans from the entire clause about the subject of the predication. The
“functional domain of reference” is effectively the intersection of the verbal subject denotatum and the nominal subject denotatum. The “functional domain of reference” is thus the set of all possible entities that pertain to the sense of the nominal expression and to the sense of the verb’s subject, in this case: the set of all unaccompanied old Aboriginal men who are alive and who aren’t the speaker and aren’t the hearer.

The noun phrase is every bit as implicated in the task of denoting the “seeker” as is the subject of the verb. In fact it is clear from this example that the set of all persons or entities that genuinely satisfies “subjecthood” of the clause, is really being expressed at a higher level of structure than the two (verbal and nominal) subject denotata. However, because the task of denoting is well established as being entrusted to constituent-level “denoting expressions”, we need an analogous verb that is applicable to what is more or less the same process, but can be said to be operating at the level of grammatical functions (or arguments). In that light, we can say that the grammatical function, subject, “functionally-designates” its “functional domain of reference”. As we can see, it is this “functional domain of reference” that truly constitutes the locus of reference, because it is from this delimited set that the hearer must select the referent that they believe the speaker is referring to.

Although this piece of data may be challenging for readers accustomed to thinking about reference in languages like English, let us not assume that this state of affairs is merely an exotic characteristic of Australian languages. It is demonstrably the case for English as well. Compare examples 6.70 and 6.71.

6.70 My sheep is getting fat.
6.71 My sheep are getting fat.

In example 6.70, the information coming from the noun phrase, *my sheep*, plus the grammatical number expressed in the verb (singular), is unified under the grammatical function “subject”. It is this functional subject and not the noun phrase that “functionally-designates” a singular sheep, as opposed to the several sheep that are “functionally-designated” in example 6.71. The fact that in English, number is generally marked in the noun phrase, obscures from view that inflected verbs have some (albeit, limited) capacity to denote their own subjects. These two examples rely entirely on this capacity (see Figure 6.5).
Although speakers recruit denoting expression for referring to referents, and they are able to do so because denoting expressions denote denotata, expressing referents is thus truly the task of grammatical functions (or arguments). However in Murriny Patha, grammatical arguments are quite often “invisible” when viewed from the level of the constituent structure, because the constituents and morphemes that make up arguments are not always as neatly compartmentalized as they are in English noun phrases. In example 6.69, virtually the entire clause is recruited for referring to persons – that is, both noun phrase and verb. However in addition to reference, the verb is also assigned the additional task of predication. Polysynthetic verbs are both denoting and predicating expressions, at the same time. They necessarily handle both tasks.

It is neither practical nor justified to dissect polysynthetic verbs into denoting units smaller than the verb complex as a whole. Firstly, in interaction, bound pronominals simply do not occur within any units that are smaller than a phonological word. More importantly, however, because the division of labour between bound pronominals and non-sibling number markers results in skewings between the

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144 In fact, the only two morphemes that aren’t implicated in referring to persons are the coverb -wintharrarr, “seek” (slot 6), and the past tense marker, -dha (slot 7).

145 Even in the contexts of self-repairs, any trouble-source verbs that are truncated prematurely are invariably either repeated or replaced in self-correction.
morphological marking of number in pronominals and the semantic marking of number at the level of grammatical functions, bound pronominals can not be construed as “argument” affixes like they can in other northern Australian polysynthetic languages (Baker 2002; Evans 2002).

Polysynthetic verbs, as well as nerbs and vouns, constitute the typical locally subsequent reference forms (see §7.1); that is, they are the unmarked form for locally subsequent reference. By contrast, coreferential denoting expressions consisting of verbs (or nerbs, or vouns) plus some sort of nominal “extra” constitute the typical locally initial reference forms. That is to say, the unmarked forms for locally initial reference consist of overt nominal groups, usually combined with cross-referring expressions (verbs/nerbs/vouns), such that the nominal group is coreferential with a cross-referring (subject or object) argument. These coreferential denoting expressions denote their respective denotata. The intersection of these respective denotata functionally designates the functional domain of reference. From this functional domain of reference, the hearer selects the referent that they believe the speaker to be referring to.

In the following chapter we will be looking at some of the anaphoric patterning that we find in Murriny Patha conversation. Particularly, we will be looking at how adhering to an unmarked pattern (by placing reference forms in the positions that they are normally placed) is a resource for not doing anything special through reference. On the other hand, deviating from such patterns (by placing reference forms in positions that they are not normally placed) is a resource for doing special interactional work through reference. In order to examine these patterning, the words and expressions that are used for referring will require a different sort grouping from how they have been presented in this chapter; that is, they can be categorized on a more conversation analytic basis, rather than a strictly morphosyntactic basis. We find that most references to persons can be categorized as belonging to six basic types: proper names, nicknames, “triangulations”, minimal descriptions, free pronouns and “verbal” cross-reference on its own (that is, verbs/nerbs and vouns without any accompanying noun phrase). Each of these categories of reference forms are typically used in particular reference positions. Although they normally occur in regular reference positions, they are available for placement in different positions for doing marked or “pointed” reference.