Marra and Kriol: the loss and maintenance of knowledge across a language shift boundary

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University
May 2015


STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other University.

Gregory F Dickson
May 2015
Abstract

Increasingly, the field of linguistics is highlighting and attending to global patterns of diminishing linguistic diversity but to a significant extent it remains unclear what the loss of a language actually entails in cultural terms. In the Roper River Region of the Northern Territory few Marra people speak their heritage language, shifting almost completely to becoming a Kriol-speaking population. This study considers the Marra language and its speakers and the Kriol spoken by young adults to explore loss and maintenance evidenced in the lexicons of the two languages and cultural and linguistic practices of speakers of both languages. A detailed timeline embeds the study in its social and cultural context (Chapter 2), populating it with stories of those whose lives intersect various stages in the shift. A survey of the lexicon of Kriol (Chapter 3) demonstrates the extent to which Marra lexical material and associated denotata have infiltrated the newer, supplanting language. This survey reveals a previously under-documented prevalence of Marra verbs in Kriol (Chapter 4), belying popular notions that substrate lexical material most commonly occurs in nominal classes. Person reference and the domain of kinship are considered (Chapter 5). A comparison of kin categories and kinterms used by Marra and Kriol speakers shows that Kriol speakers use fewer kinterms and have collapsed some distinctions found in Marra. Yet many categories and some lexical forms are maintained in Kriol, while the use of kinterms in person reference and other pragmatic uses, such as politeness strategies, is similar across both languages. Additionally, Kriol speakers have innovated upon their kinship system in some ways not attested in Marra or English. Finally, the domain of ethnobiology is considered, with specific attention paid to traditional medicine – a domain typically thought to clearly show the effects of shifts in language and lifestyle. A first pharmacopeia of Marra bush medicine is presented (Chapter 6), followed by a quantitative study of Kriol speakers’ knowledge and use of bush medicine (Chapter 7). This reveals a shift in the salience of ethnobiological taxa in relation to the ceremonial lives of Kriol speakers and an overall reduced knowledge base. However, Kriol speakers are found to be maintaining core health beliefs pertaining to bush medicine, and display a greater degree of knowledge, usage and nomenclature than had been previously described.

Given the large-scale social disruption and lifestyle changes that have occurred since Marra ceased being transmitted to children, it is impossible to reach definitive conclusions about the manifestations that the loss of the language has for the ontology of Kriol-speaking Marra people. This study describes numerous continuations of lexical use, pragmatics and cultural practices among Kriol speakers, alongside expected areas where
Kriol speakers’ cultural practices and language use does not reflect the knowledge of their Marra speaking forebears and the intricacies of their language. Given the examples of maintenance and innovation, I warn against simplistic negative generalisations about the effects of language loss on the culture of generations who live on the other side of language shift boundaries.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am acutely aware of the privileged position that has afforded me the opportunity to learn some of Australia’s most endangered languages for a period of over a decade. Many Aboriginal people, through forces outside their control, live lives that are tougher than they should be and are denied similar opportunities despite being more entitled to them than I am. With this understanding, I am extremely grateful to so many people in the Roper River Region who have offered me acceptance, shared their knowledge with me and provided wonderful assistance that has made this thesis possible. I do not have space to describe the ways in which you have all helped me, so here is a list of names and a big THANK YOU attached: John Joshua, Cherry Wulumirr Daniels, Betty Naburruluyurr Roberts, Freda Miramba Roberts†, Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi, Topsy Mindiririju Numamurdirdi, Bessie Wunyuga Numamurdirdi†, Henry Juluba Numamurdirdi, Maureen Marranggulu Thompson†, Donald Blitner, Hazel Farrell, Bobby Nunggumajbarr Sr., Dwayne Rogers, Kamahl Murrungun, Gene Daniels, Patrick Daniels, Dorianne Roberts, Daniel Wilfred and family, Amelia Huddleston, Anthony Daniels, Angelina Joshua, Grant Thompson, Cleo Wilfred†, Naomi Wilfred, Jason Farrell, Maria Ponto, August Sandy†, Stephen Roberts†, Doris Watson, Ruth George, Arnold George, Esau Thompson†, Wally Wilfred, Benjamin Wilfred, David Wilfred, Barry Billy, Aaron Joshua, Glen Blitner, Godfrey Blitner, Glenda Robertson, Martina Hall, Maritza Roberts, Selma Hall, Philip Robertson, Clarence Dingul, Roland Lansen, Edna Nelson, Priscilla Dixon, Robin Rogers, Alan Joshua Sr.†, Tom E Lewis and Norma Joshua†.

In particular, I want to thank the core team who contributed to the documentation of Marra that accompanied this study: John Joshua for his loyal assistance and support and Betty Roberts for an incredible number of hours contributed to recording and transcription sessions as well as an inspiring level of unwavering dedication to language work. And two old ladies who sadly passed away during this study. I am so grateful for their contributions and the opportunity I had to work with them in their final years. The loss experienced as a result of their passing is enormous. Freda Miramba Roberts and Maureen Marranggulu Thompson are absolute treasures and absolutely irreplaceable.

I am grateful to many people who assisted in wide-ranging ways during fieldwork: Julie North, Antony Lynch and all at Ngukurr Arts Aboriginal Corporation; Brian Burkett; Lyndy and Peter Berthon; Anna Johnson; Emilie-Jane Ens; Julie-Ann Bassinder; Bobby Nunggumajbarr and the Northern Land Council; Karman Lippitt and the Li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers; Simon Normand; Jo and Trevor Henselwood; Ruth Brigden; Noella Goveas; Patrick McCloskey and Karin Riederer; Brighde Collins; and
especially the Ngukurr Language Centre Aboriginal Corporation and its superstar coordinator Salome Harris. Further afield, I owe great thanks to Jo Bushby at ANU and in particular the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme who, with their small grant, significantly increased the amount and depth of Marra documentation I could do and remunerate Marra people for.

Thank you to many people in and around Katherine, including: Rebecca Hayden, Eugenie Collyer, Miliwanga Sandy, Simone Pascoe, Cerise King and many others involved with the Aboriginal Interpreter Services; Fleur Parry and others at Djilpin Arts such as Evangeline Cameron, Boronia Saggars, Pascale Dettwiller and Steven Schubert.

In academic spheres, I am grateful that, despite my previous claims that I would never consider an endeavour such as this I have been shown lots of support and encouragement. Thank you to Sarah Cutfield, Felicity Meakins, Caroline Jones, Sophie Nicholls, Melanie Wilkinson, Rebecca Green, Kathy McMahon, Kazuko Obata, Cameo Dalley, John Hobson, Renae O’Hanlon, Claire Salter, John Bradley, Bree Blakeman and many friends made at the 2011 Linguistics Institute in Boulder, Colorado. A wonderful cohort of fellow PhD students and other linguists at ANU were a great support, including Christian Döhler, Julia Miller, Maïa Ponsonnet, Aung Si, Sebastien Lacrampe, Charlotte van Tongeren, Piers Kelly, Sally Dixon, Chikako Senge, Darja Hoenigman, David Nash, John Mansfield and Jane Simpson. I am hugely indebted to the work of linguists who described the languages of the Roper River Region before I came along. I would still be losing sleep over verbal morphology if it wasn’t for Ken Hale, Jeffrey Heath, Margaret Sharpe, John Sandefur, Francesca Merlan, Brett Baker and Jen Munro. I also have to thank AIATSIS and its staff who facilitated access to treasure troves of language material.

Regarding such materials, I would like to express respect and gratitude to the Marra people who shared their language and knowledge with Ken Hale and Jeffrey Heath last century: Mack Riley, George Riley, Tom Riley, Ginger Riley, Anday, Nangurru, Dulu, Jack Malginy, Simon and Ned. The legacy they have left is tremendous.

To my stellar supervisory panel: Nick Evans, I don’t know what possessed you to encourage me to take this trip when you swept through town all those years ago, but I am glad you did. It has been an absolute pleasure to have some of what you know and do rub off on me. Thank you for all the brilliant feedback and advice. Johanna Rendle-Short, you were about the only familiar face when I arrived in Canberra and you have stuck by me this whole time. Harold Koch, the efficiency of your reviewing and the insights you bring have been absolutely key to the progress of my work. Murray Garde, that our paths have
crossed at all is quite remarkable. Despite our highly mobile lives, you have given me
great advice and I know you have been cheering me on. Lastly, Inge Kral: you have been
such a great support, given me fantastic advice and, most surprisingly to me, turned me
into a confident writer. Thank you so much.

Student life in Canberra was only survivable thanks to the Chopras who opened up their
home to a nephew/cousin to whom they owed nothing. Thank you. And thanks to my
awesome tennis buddies: I definitely wouldn’t have got this far without time on and off
the court with Mitchell Platt, Scott Ketley and Jerry Yik.

Thank you to my immediate family: my mum, dad, my sisters and their families. Mum and
dad, your generosity has not only made this work possible but also made possible any
benefits I have been able to pass on to others, especially in Ngukurr. Thanks to my sisters
for your support and forgiveness for too much distance and too many missed birthdays.

Lastly, to Lewis: you had even less idea than I did about what I was getting myself into
with this thing but you were amazing and solid as a rock in helping me through it. I can’t
thank you enough.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Mrs. Betty Naburruluyurr Roberts.

Munyumunyu,

Unfortunately, this book won't bring back the languages of Ngukurr. But it does tell us that they will never be completely lost. Thank you for your support and assistance. Your dedication to supporting the languages of Ngukurr has inspired me greatly.
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NOTES ON PRESENTATION OF LINGUISTIC DATA

Language data are numbered in a system using the chapter number followed by a sequential number, for example (5.15) is the fifteenth example given in Chapter 5. Some examples feature both Kriol and Marra. Where it is useful to show code-switching or borrowings, portions in underlined italics are in the lesser-used language while the main language is transcribed in plain italics. In rare instances where a third language is used, this is marked by wavy underlining. In examples where speakers code-switch into English (standard English or a not fully acquired variety of English), this is represented by the use of English orthography.

Some examples, particularly in Chapter 2, are presented because of the historical or autobiographical information contained within. In such cases, glosses are often omitted. Examples that are glossed follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules as closely as possible. In particular, I have made extensive use of the optional rule 4B, where a semicolon is used when an element is unsegmentable but has two or more clearly distinguishable meanings or grammatical properties. This is commonly used when glossing Marra verbs, where an unsegmentable verb ending may encode tense and punctuality on a variety of semantically opaque auxiliary verb stems. Because of the semantically-opaque and suppletive nature of many verb stems, they are usually glossed only by the verb root form in parentheses. The other feature of the Leipzig Glossing Rules regularly used is optional rule 4C where a colon separates elements that are segmentable but the segmentation is not shown in the transcription. This is used to ensure language data is presented in working orthographies.

An example of this glossing practice is given below (from example 4.23) using the verb ending an.gayi. In this example, the ending –ayi is a form of the verb stem –ganji, inflected for past tense and in potential or irrealis mood. These three components are separated by semicolons. The colon shows that it is possible to distinguish the pronominal morphology (the prefix (n)an.gu-) from the inflected verb ending:

\[
\text{nyal-an.gayi} \\
\text{support_in_fight-3SG>1SG;(-ganji);PST;POT}
\]

In certain portions of the thesis, additional abbreviations and symbols are used. Several examples presented are extended extracts involving three or more conversation participants. In these examples, some basic conventions from Conversation Analysis (CA) have been adopted, such as representations of pause and overlapping speech. Additionally, kinship abbreviations are used widely, especially in Chapter 5.
two-letter kinship abbreviations instead of single-letter versions (i.e. *Fa* for ‘father’ instead of *F*). This is to avoid confusion between other single-letter abbreviations used elsewhere (e.g. F for feminine gender rather than ‘father’, M for masculine gender rather than ‘mother’ etc.). A full list of abbreviations and glossing conventions used in this dissertation is presented below.
# ABBREVIATIONS

## Glossing Abbreviations and Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>NMLZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>PER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFIRM</td>
<td>Affirmative</td>
<td>POT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>Allative</td>
<td>PROG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTR</td>
<td>Centripedal</td>
<td>PRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>PST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNJ</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>PUNCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>Demostrative</td>
<td>PURP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>OBL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>RECP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCL</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
<td>REDUP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>REFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>REL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABIT</td>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>TAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERJ</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
<td>TR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>Irrealis</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Noun class</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td>Epenthetic syllable</td>
<td>&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSG</td>
<td>Non-singular</td>
<td></td>
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**Kinship Abbreviations and Symbols**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Br</td>
<td>Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch</td>
<td>child(ren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si</td>
<td>Sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>Younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♀</td>
<td>female EGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♂</td>
<td>male EGO</td>
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**Conversation Analysis Symbols**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(</td>
<td>Pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>duration of pause (seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(</td>
<td>indicates doubt of what is being said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>overlapping talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>connected dialogue, overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td>smile voice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Abbreviations**

- **ABC** Australian Broadcasting Commission
- **AIATSIS** Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- **BIITE** Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
- **CDEP** Community Development Employment Projects
- **CMS** Church Missionary Society
- **CSIRO** Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
- **ELDP** Endangered Languages Documentation Programme
- **FATSIL** Federations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
- **NT** Northern Territory
- **QLD** Queensland
- **SBS** Special Broadcasting Service
- **SIL (AAIB)** Summer Institute of Linguistics (Australian Aborigines and Islanders Branch)
1 INTRODUCTION

“When you lose a language, you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art. It’s like dropping a bomb on a museum, the Louvre.” – Ken Hale

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The accelerating loss of languages and our planet’s diminishing linguistic diversity is now well known. Increasingly, this issue is entering the social consciousness among speakers of dominant and minority languages alike. Accordingly, in recent history endangered languages have increasingly become the focus of academic research and community-based activities. Research on minority and endangered languages increased significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. In many instances this was motivated by efforts to gather data for descriptive purposes to be used ultimately to inform and test linguistic theories such as Chomsky’s Universal Grammar. In recent decades, research activity has paid increasing attention to the social and community benefits that can be brought to small, often disadvantaged, societies by documenting, resourcing and better understanding their languages (Hale et al. 1992). In the past decade, documentary linguistics has become an independent field and legitimate scholarly practice (Himmelmann 1998; 2006), where the careful documentation of a minority language is itself the focus of scholarly research, rather than being only a component of broader endeavours such as grammatical description. Another recent trend sees scholarly attention given to the description and analysis of efforts to teach, maintain and revitalise minority and/or endangered languages (e.g. Hinton and Hale 2001).

One of the key values underpinning the attention afforded to endangered languages is the belief that each individual language system encodes a unique worldview. Ken Hale’s quote, given above, is one of the most iconic and frequently cited quotes conveying this belief. Dixon’s landmark publication The Languages of Australia describes how “Australian grammars can reflect the habitat of their speakers” (Dixon 1980: 474). Some take the relationship between language and cultural knowledge further, claiming that languages function as conduits for the transfer of knowledge specific to that speech community. For example, Maffi (2005) discusses work by Harmon (1996) on the relationship between biological and linguistic diversity and suggests that not only does a language system encode cultural knowledge but also transmits it:

... the local languages, through which [ethnobiological] knowledge was encoded and transmitted .... (Maffi 2005: 605)
Evans expresses similar sentiments:

Small languages and societies have kept their place in the world by being finely tuned to their local ecologies and amassing a rich fund of knowledge about them. Much of this has been carried forward just in their languages. (Evans 2010: 21)

The notion that languages hold and can even transmit cultural knowledge has become popularised and often taken at face value by members of the general public. For example, the multi-million pound Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) states that language loss "can be a social, cultural and scientific disaster because languages express the unique knowledge, history and worldview of their communities" (The Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project 2013). This appeal to the public to pay attention to endangered languages, based on the premise that a language encodes cultural knowledge and/or a unique worldview, is also reflected in their tagline:

*Because every last word means another lost world*

Similar sentiments are used to garner support in other domains, such as for bilingual education:

*L’extermination d’une langue, d’une culture et d’un peuple sont une seul et même chose.* (The extermination of a language, of a culture, and of a people are all one and the same thing). (Naert et al. 1962: 355 in Andersson and Boyer 1970: 48)

Yet while ideas and assumptions on the relationship between language, cultural knowledge and transmission of knowledge are discussed often, it is less common for these ideas to be carefully tested or examined closely. One scholar who identified this research gap is Anthony Woodbury, stating:

... it is usually assumed that the loss of language entails a loss of social identity or of culture (e.g. Krauss 1992). Yet there has been relatively little explicit inquiry into the question, leaving little in the way of either theory or empirical experience. It still is not known what is entailed when a community loses its language. (Woodbury 1998: 235)

Woodbury offers detail on further lines of investigation:

To show that these linguistic systems have become the basis of community-specific practices, it is crucial to make and study careful records of natural speech of different kinds ... In particular, it is important to document and compare the use of both the old and the new language in order to gauge processes of transfer (or non-transfer) of the systems under study. (Woodbury 1998: 258)

This thesis explores exactly this question. It attempts to contribute to the relatively small amount of careful research on such topics by comparing two languages: an endangered
traditional Australian Aboriginal language, Marra, and Kriol, the creole language that is now the first language for the vast majority of Marra people. The main location where fieldwork took place is Ngukurr, shown in Map 1–1 below. Other locations of note include Numbulwar where additional fieldwork was carried out and the location of Marra land, to the south-east of Ngukurr. Map 1–1 reflects the geography and sociolinguistic situation of the region at the time of the study (e.g. only languages that feature in the contemporary linguistic ecology of the region are given). Subsequent maps provided in Chapter 2 reflect the social and linguistic geography of the region in other historical eras. The remainder of this chapter contextualises the present study by discussing previous relevant research and the methodology employed and introduces the two languages involved in this instance of language shift.

Map 1–1: Contemporary snapshot of Roper River Region, the location of this study

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section delineates some of the key theoretical domains that are straddled by this study. Four main fields are discussed: language endangerment and loss, language shift,
studies that link linguistic and cultural knowledge, and pidgin and creole studies. These fields are discussed here and are returned to in the Conclusion. Further background material relating to major chapters such as substrate lexical influence (Chapter 3), substrate verbal structures (Chapter 4), kinship (Chapter 5), and traditional medicine (Chapters 6 and 7) is provided in the relevant chapters.

1.2.1 LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT AND LOSS

Studies focusing on language endangerment and loss describe the decline of global linguistic diversity, the contexts around such decline as well as the importance of addressing it and how to do so (e.g. Hale et al. 1992; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; McConvell and Thieberger 2001; Evans 2010). Such research offers reasons as to why diminishing linguistic diversity should be a cause of concern. Commonly cited reasons include the social and cultural impacts that language loss brings language communities, the potential loss to scholarship and, more broadly, the loss to “human intellectual life” (Hale 1992: 35).

Rates of language loss and endangerment are accelerating and are extraordinarily high compared to earlier human history. Often cited figures from Krauss (1992) are that potentially half the planet's languages will be lost by 2100 and further calculations posit that a language is lost every two weeks (e.g. Evans 2010: xviii). Australia, the location of this study, represents the “worst continent by far” in regard to language loss (Krauss 1992: 5). McConvell and Thieberger’s landmark national report proposed that “by 2050 there will no longer be any Indigenous languages spoken in Australia” (McConvell and Thieberger 2001: 2), a situation that has been acknowledged internationally:

... with 90 percent of its estimated 250 languages near extinction. Only some 50 languages are widely spoken today and of these only 18 have at least 500 speakers... There is no Aboriginal language that is used in all arenas of everyday life by members of a sizeable community. It is possible that only two or three of the languages will survive into the next century. (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 9)

With the present study situated geographically in a global hotspot of language endangerment, its findings are significant to studies within this field. In the Australian context, research on language endangerment has been advanced by studies such as McConvell and Thieberger (2001) which described patterns of language attrition and developed indices by which they can be measured. Schmidt (1985) presents a case-study of (so-called) language death, observing what was happening to the Dyirbal language as spoken by young people who did not acquire the language fully.
In observing languages becoming obsolete in Australia, McConvell describes a contributing factor common in Australian Aboriginal contexts. He saw that in some places young people who did know their ancestral language were reluctant to speak it and concluded that this was for social and psychological reasons:

... the rule against speaking the old language is not primarily a question of the basic communication function, that is the competence of the children, or of the cultural function, but of the social function, with strong psychological backing supporting the identification of speaking the old language with old people and their ways. (McConvell 1991: 154)

Research on language loss and endangerment is supplemented by a growing body of research on how to stem or slow rates of loss. Programs such as language nests and master-apprentice schemes developed internationally are now being recommended for and introduced to some locations in Australia (Marmion, Obata and Troy 2014).

One potential oversight in many studies of language endangerment is that they tend to focus on speaker fluency and grammatical competence as the primary measure of vitality, seeing language as a system of grammatical, phonological and morphological rules and backgrounding social functions that a language serves. Looking through a different prism, interactional and sociolinguistic studies can demonstrate that language viability is not just a matter of grammatical competence, and consider that "a language is not dead until it ceases to serve any function" (Eades 2013: 22). Arguments that “a language is said to be dead when no one speaks it any more” and that “unless it has fluent speakers no one would talk of it as a ‘living language’” (Crystal 2002: 11) are too simplistic – a point exemplified further in this study.

1.2.2 LANGUAGE SHIFT

Research on language shift is closely related to research on language loss and endangerment and the separation of the two fields is in some ways arbitrary, although differences are evident. If the latter is more concerned with describing the linguistic ecology surrounding diminishing diversity and what can be done to maintain diversity, studies about language shift are more concerned with the careful description of processes within a speech community or population of changing patterns of use of one or more languages. Studies of language shift are more often based upon methodologies used in anthropology and sociology (Fasold 1984: 239).

Language shift is generally seen as an intergenerational process, with a period or generation of bilingualism that diminishes to monolingualism in subsequent generations.
Specific details on how this happens, however, are the subject of debate. Kulick argues that views which see parents as consciously deciding not to pass on their vernacular are problematic, saying that "studies on child language acquisition have been increasingly moving … to a framework stressing the interactional nature of language socialisation" (Kulick 1992: 13). Sutton (1978), built upon by Merlan (1981), warns against viewing language shift as a purely communal phenomenon, arguing that the "mechanism may better be characterised as chain-reactions starting from the acts of individuals, ramifying through their personal networks" (Sutton 1978: 10). Sutton acknowledges that group consciousness of linguistic norms and changes plays a key role but he sees "collective speech differences as projections of individual differences, distributed via the networks of individuals, and maintained by the interactions of individuals" (ibid: 10).

Kulick takes a slightly different approach again, tying phenomena of language shift to "the impact that the conceptions and understandings held by a group of people – about personhood, language, children, interpersonal relations, and change – can come to have on their language" (Kulick 1992: x). He argues that many studies on languages shift describe situations where shift has already occurred thereby missing key opportunities to study changing patterns of transmission and "the socialisation of the first generation of nonvernacular-speaking children" (Kulick 1992: 12).

Some Australian studies have attempted to inform this very aspect. Langlois (2004) describes Pitjantjatjara as spoken by teenagers in Areyonga (Central Australia) from grammatical and sociolinguistic perspectives. She observed the extent to which teenagers' Pitjantjatjara is being influenced by English and found many signs of influence from English, including lexical borrowing and changes in the phonological system, but noted that "cross-linguistic influences are relatively restricted" (Langlois 2004: 179). Langlois found it unlikely that the language change occurring in Areyonga is an indication of language loss or simplification (ibid: 180). Langlois finds evidence of complexification occurring alongside change and simplification, a phenomenon also found in this study.

The current study is similar to Langlois' in that it explores language shift and contrasts a traditional language to one used contemporaneously. Yet it varies significantly in the language ecology and historical context of the area and language(s) under discussion. Pitjantjatjara speaking Anangu of Areyonga have remained in a community where their language dominates, whereas Marra people have always been a minority in the settlements they have lived in since leaving their land. Anangu also did not experience
the same degree of disruption caused by frontier violence and impacts from the pastoral industry.

A related study on language shift by Schmidt (1985) (mentioned briefly in §1.2.1) studied the use of Dyirbal (Northern Queensland) by the generation of adults at the juncture of community-wide language shift from Dyirbal to the local variety of English. Again, the context of Schmidt’s study differs from this one in that (a) shift was occurring ‘on country’ and (b) shift was occurring along a linear continuum from Traditional Dyirbal to English. Similarly, Mansfield (2014) observed linguistic and cultural shifts among young Murrinh Patha speakers in Wadeye (NT). In that location, Murrinh Patha is being retained as the main language of communication among Wadeye youth, however they are reinterpreting aspects of their language in ways that appear to be peer-driven, as Schmidt observed about Dyirbal youth.

Schmidt, Langlois and Mansfield each describe changes, adaptations and innovations underway in existing language systems – comparing new forms to ‘traditional’ systems. A related study geographically closer to this one is a description of Dhuwaya (Amery 1993), a koine that developed in Yirrkala in North-east Arnhem Land. In the case of Dhuwaya, English was not a factor in language shift. Instead, it developed as a new dialect of Yolŋu Matha in response to a social need. Technically, it is an example of dialect shift rather than language shift.

The present study has a different scope from those mentioned above. It compares semantic ranges and communicative expressiveness in certain domains but across two distinct language systems. This probably relates to what McConvell refers to when he says that “most studies by and large consider only what is happening to one of the languages in the languages situation” (McConvell 1991: 144) – a shortcoming that I hope to avoid with this study.

Language shift phenomena are particularly salient in relation to research on creoles. Although this was not strongly acknowledged in the 1980s when Bickerton’s bioprogram hypothesis was influential, which diminished the relevance of language shift to creole studies, language shift is now seen as core to how creolisation processes are understood. As Munro points out, “the role of the community language shift, rather than primary natinisation of a pidgin by children, has become an increasingly recognised condition of creole emergence” (Munro 2000: 247).


1.2.3 Language, culture and language socialisation

Another body of research pertinent to this study explores the relationship between language and cultural knowledge and the ramifications language shift or loss has on the transmission of knowledge. The relationship between language and culture comes to the fore particularly in lexical and lexico-semantic studies like the present one:

Another concern of semantics is to shed light on the relationship between language and culture, or more accurately, between languages and cultures. Much of the vocabulary of any language, and even parts of the grammar, will reflect the culture of its speakers. Indeed, the culture-specific concepts and ways of understanding embedded in a language are an important part of what constitutes a culture. (Goddard 2011: 1–2)

Notions that language and culture are inextricably linked are difficult to test. Woodbury (1998), however, does so by showing how semantics distinctions achieved by various affective suffixes in Cup'ik are not available to Chevak people following language shift from Cup'ik to English. Evans (2010: 69–80) provides numerous examples of linguistic features in individual language systems affecting cognition and social cognition and elegantly summarises his survey as follows:

To speak Kayardild you need to discriminate many types of intention. To speak Dalabon you have to pay constant attention to the kinship relations between all people in your social world. To speak Japanese or Korean, you must pay close attention to the boundary between what is knowable by introspection and what is knowable by external observation. To speak Newari you need to keep track of volitionality. To speak Eastern Pomo or Matses you must carefully weigh and specify your information source for each statement. (ibid: 79)

He also identifies the challenge of being categorical about the relationship between particular language systems and cultural knowledge or social cognition:

Of course English-speakers, as well, can learn to do all these things... How far Kayardild, Dalabon, Newari, Japanese, Korean, Eastern Pomo, or Matses bring this awareness on sooner or more routinely than English does ... needs a coordination of linguistic and psychological methods ... and there has not as yet been significant research in this area. (ibid: 79)

A potential issue in considering language systems and applying questions of cultural maintenance is that it risks overlooking an essential step in the acquisition of language and transmission of knowledge: the central role of language socialisation. In broad terms, socialisation is "realised to a great extent through the use of language, the primary symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed" (Garrett and Baquedano-López
Ochs and Schieffelin point out further that “the process of acquiring language is embedded and constitutive of the process of becoming socialised to be a competent member of a social group” (Ochs and Schieffelin 2008: 5). Language socialisation processes, despite having a clear role in language shift, are typically the domain of anthropology, while research on endangered languages is typically the domain of linguistics. As a result, “the full extent of the interplay and influence of language socialisation and language endangerment remains something of a mystery” (Nonaka 2012). This study aims to provide some pieces that may help solve the puzzle.

Research into language socialisation in cross-cultural contexts provides “insights into the manner in which everyday language activities – as socialising activities – form the basis for the transmission and reproduction of culture that are linked to the social practices and symbolic forms of that community” (Kral 2012: 10). For example, Wyman’s longitudinal study of Yup’ik youth at both sides of language ‘tip’ looks beyond the effects that formal education has on language socialisation. Wyman (2009) finds that peer and family relationships are central to young people tipping into English but also that the retention of prestige for some activities such as hunting also contributes to retention of value and knowledge of the Yup’ik language among youth. In remote Australian locations where language shift processes are evident, alterations to language socialisation processes are similarly evident. Kral and Schwab identify factors such as diminishing oral traditions, reduced function of fluency in traditional languages and the predominance of English in education and media as “deeply affecting” language socialisation processes in such places (Kral and Schwab 2012: 46). By examining the sociohistorical context of the language shift described in the present study (Chapter 2) and marrying that to culturally-salient features attested in new forms of language used by the community, we can gain insights into how language socialisation practices may have been altered or maintained.

1.2.4 PIDGIN AND CREOLE STUDIES

With one of the languages under discussion in this thesis being a creole, this study is of obvious relevance to the field of pidgin and creole studies, although it should be noted it has not been carried out within a framework specific to the field of creolistics. Major focus areas of pidgin and creoles studies relate to the typology and description of the world’s creoles, capturing why (and if) they form a unique subgroup of languages, and describing and theorising processes of creolisation. While the present study does not explicitly address those main themes, the data and findings clearly contribute to studies within creolistics, particularly through its examination of substrate lexical influence and the primary research that has been carried out with speakers of a key substrate language.
The depth with which this study is able to examine such influences is somewhat rare in that, among world creoles, Kriol has creolised relatively recently (within the past 100 years) and in geographic and linguistic proximity/contact with its substrate languages, their speakers and their territories. Many of the world’s best-described creoles are spoken by people who were removed further from their original homelands and many also do not have such clear and traceable substrate influences. Such creoles include those that developed in plantation, slavery and indentured labour situations among populations who were isolated from substrate territories (e.g. the Caribbean, Mauritius, Kanaka English in 1800s North Queensland) or in places that were previously barely inhabited (e.g. Sao Tome, Cape Verde).

There are, however, several examples of contexts and situations more akin to that found with Roper Kriol: creoles that developed in close contact with substrates. One such language was Berbice Dutch which has fallen out of use but was spoken in Guyana and described by Silvia Kouwenberg (1994). Its lexicon was influenced heavily by Eastern Ijo, which supplied around a quarter of the language’s lexemes (according to the Swadesh lists in Kouwenberg 1994). Substrate lexical influence on other Caribbean creoles is slighter: around 250 lexemes of African origin were found in Jamaican Creole and 2.7% of Haitian Creole’s lexicon were found to be African borrowings in a 1981 study (Holm 2000: 115, also Farquharson 2012). In Surinamese creoles (e.g. Sranan and Saramaccan), around 130 lexemes occur from Gbe languages of west Africa and a “roughly equal” amount from Kikingo, a Bantu language of central Africa (Arends, Kouwenberg and Norval 1994: 106–107).

Sri Lanka Malay (Nordhoff 2009) is a Malay-lexified creole that developed endogenously in contact with Sinhalese and Tamil. Only a small amount of lexical material appears to have transferred from Tamil and appears to occur mainly in nominal classes. Keesing’s study of Melanesian Pidgin (1988) likewise describes the development of a contact language in-situ. Keesing observed the Solomons variety of Melanesian Pidgin from a rare perspective for an external researcher: first acquiring knowledge of the smaller, local language Kwaio before then acquiring Melanesian Pidgin. Keesing found “a virtual morpheme-by-morpheme correspondence” (ibid: 1) between Melanesian Pidgin and Kwaio but he did not discuss lexical contributions from Kwaio in detail. Substrate lexical material appears to be limited in that case, possibly due to Solomons Pidgin being used as an auxiliary language among Kwaio speakers: the potential for Kwaio speakers to simply calque Pidgin onto the patterns of Kwaio may have allowed speakers to more easily reserve Kwaio lexemes for Kwaio discourse.
The present study contributes to creolistics by presenting nuanced accounts of aspects of the lexicon of Kriol, paying particular attention to substrate influences. Lexical studies of creoles have arguably not advanced in parallel with syntactic studies, a point made by Mühlhäusler (1979):

> It is ironic that so-called relexification theory, a theory which appears to be concerned with the lexicon, has in fact led away from lexical studies to increased concern with the syntactic properties of pidgin and creole languages, particularly their tense and aspect systems. (Mühlhäusler 1979: 24)

Despite a gap being evident, some scholars have focused their attention on describing the lexicons of various creoles. More often than not such studies have, like syntactic and other descriptive studies, been motivated by efforts to better describe processes of creolisation and contribute to the typology of creoles. Few studies describe lexical features of creoles on their own terms (i.e. without comparing differences – usually semantic or phonological – to the lexifier or substrates in which the lexemes originated) and few use the lexicon as a means of exploring processes of cultural shift and continuity in detail, although some aspects are often briefly noted. For example, Mühlhäusler states that Tok Pisin retains local lexemes “primarily” in domains of plant and animals names and “cultural items and concepts” (1979: 196–7). Contrastingly, Alleyne found that words of African origin in Caribbean creoles “belong to a semantic category that can be generally described as private in contrast with the broad semantic category of Euro-derived words that may be termed public” (Alleyne 1971: 176). This includes domains such as “sexuality, religion or other African cultural survivals with no equivalent in the European language” (Holm 2000: 116).

It appears as though the observations that lexical studies of creoles have made regarding cultural continuities are skewed towards the notion that substrate words fill ‘gaps’ that existed in the lexifier’s lexicon. As demonstrated in this study, this is not the case with Roper Kriol; there appears to be no obvious pattern by which substrate (mostly Marra) words are retained in the language, and some domains that are lexically sufficient in English such as verbs and kinterms are littered with lexemes derived from local languages.

1.3 **Methodology**

1.3.1 **Ethical Considerations**

Michael Krauss delivered something of a wake-up call to the discipline of linguistics when he described the possibility that it could "go down in history as the only science
that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90% of the very field to which it is
dedicated” (1992: 10). In the Australian context, linguistics had taken steps in the 1960s
and 1970s to acknowledge and attempt to address the continent’s diminishing linguistic
diversity, including efforts to increase documentation of endangered languages (Sharpe
2001c), support bilingual education (Hoogenraad 2001) and community-driven
programs (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Affairs 2012), train Indigenous language speakers (Black and Breen 2001) and
uphold the linguistic rights of Indigenous people (Australian Linguistics Society [1984]
2015). In line with these efforts and ideologies, ethical considerations were brought to
the fore in developing the methodology of this study. Particularly influential was the
ethical argument and subsequent benefits that pertain to doing research under
Aboriginal control, as described by David Wilkins (1992). While the present study falls
short of the approach described by Wilkins, I was able to devise a study that centres
around a community-identified need: documentation of the endangered Marra language.
This means that the genesis of the present study did not start with a research question
around which a methodology was devised, but rather it began with ethical considerations
and a community-identified need which led to the development of an appropriate
research question. The ethical considerations that underpin the present study could be
better termed “constraints”: non-negotiables that would shape the type of investigation
that would be possible. These constraints included:

- Being able to carry out a detailed Marra documentation project
- Maximising the involvement of community members in the research
- Maximising the community development and training/education outcomes
  stemming from the research
- Ensuring the research topic is comprehensible to non-linguists.

These constraints reflect an effort towards achieving best ethical practice in my research
and affirming the existing working relationships I had with numerous community
members. Such constraints are also based on the premise that they are compatible with
academic research, which is what I attempted to demonstrate in my Honours research
(Dickson 2004). Of course, this was not determined in isolation but informed by existing
guidelines on conducting ethical research on Aboriginal people in Australia and
Indigenous perspectives on research:

It is essential that Indigenous people are full participants in research projects that
concern them, share an understanding of the aims and methods of the research,
and share the results of this work. At every stage, research with and about
Indigenous peoples must be founded on a process of meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the researcher and Indigenous people. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (AIATSIS) 2012: 1)

Documents such as AIATSIS’ Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies (2012) and the Federations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages’ (FATSIL) Guide to Community Protocols for Indigenous Language Projects (2004) are manifestations of concerns many Indigenous people have about outsiders carrying out research in Indigenous communities. The discipline of linguistics is not immune from criticism, such as for its tendency to engage in formal research that divorces speech acts and language systems from language speakers, community and psychosocial realities. Martin Nakata, a Torres Strait Islander academic argued that:

[the] inability of linguists to give primacy to language speakers and to the history of a language ... remains a fundamental limitation of linguistic practice to this day. This shortcoming has come about because scholars have taken for granted an approach that single-mindedly submerges and subjugates the presence of people and their community. (Nakata 2007: 39)

Further evidence supporting the value of community-focused methodological approaches to research can be found in linguistic studies on Aboriginal languages that employed such approaches. As already mentioned, Wilkins (1992) outlines methods of conducting linguistic research under Aboriginal control, a methodology used fruitfully for his research on Mparntwe Arrernte and by others such as Harkins who provided a nuanced account of English used by Aboriginal children in Alice Springs (Harkins 1994). Similarly Diana Eades carried out doctoral research under the guidance and supervision of the Aboriginal people she was studying. This led to analyses of pragmatics that richly incorporated the social and cultural context of those she studied, acknowledging that it was “impossible to understand language without understanding its social cultural context” (Eades 1988: 114). Therefore, it should be clear that such ‘constraints’ did not require a reinvention of a methodological wheel, and can actually enhance research outputs. Precedents are apparent and sociolinguistic methodologies such as interactional sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication slotted in nicely with my stated research goals. These approaches are discussed in §1.3.3 but the following section provides background on my own experiences and how they have informed the methodology.

1.3.2 PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

The research methodology used in this study builds upon years already spent working on language projects in the region where the study took place. Most of this work was
applied, community-controlled or community-focused, beginning in 2002 when I was first thrust into the sphere of doing linguistic work in remote communities in the Northern Territory. At that time, a short-staffed Katherine Language Centre\(^1\) hired me for six months as a very green linguistics graduate. I bumbled through that period largely ignorant about working successfully with Aboriginal people or knowing how to bridge the gap between my academic training and lack of applied experience. Despite being terrible at my job initially, I saw the potential social benefits that an effective community linguist could bring. I spent the next couple of years improving my practice which included completing an Honours project that involved a community-focused project documenting a detailed text in Alawa. To carry out that project, I spent two months in Minyerri and it was there that my knowledge of Kriol (specifically, the Roper Kriol dialect) developed from a basic level to reasonable fluency. This also resulted in an Honours thesis (Dickson 2004) arguing that such a community-focused project can lead to mutual benefits for language description. In practical terms, it allowed me to develop skills as a community linguist and become a more effective non-Indigenous worker working in remote communities. Immediately after completing my Honours, I returned to work at Katherine Language Centre, this time employed in the community of Ngukurr to oversee the operations of the organisation’s only remote annexe, the Ngukurr Language Centre. It was there that I started working with Marra speakers and continued working closely with them for the three years I held that position (2004–2007). From 2008 to 2009, I worked from Katherine as a lecturer in linguistics and trainer of language workers at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE, an adult education institution specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). During this time I continued to work with Marra people and others from Ngukurr who were enrolled in language work courses, although my work in Ngukurr was infrequent and limited to training provision.

These experiences combined to provide the major motivating factor that led to the present study: to seize what was likely to be the last opportunity to make a significant contribution to the documentation of Marra. After working with Marra people and people from Ngukurr for a number of years, I was keenly aware of the critically endangered state of the Marra language and that there had been no significant systematic documentation of the language since the 1970s. I had existing relationships with most of the last

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\(^1\) Officially named Diwurrurwurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation, the Katherine Language Centre was an Aboriginal-controlled non-profit community organisation established to support around two dozen Aboriginal languages spoken across the greater Katherine Region of the Northern Territory.
speakers of Marra and many of their descendants and was well aware of community desire and interest for further work to be carried out on the language. As an irregular visitor in 2008 and 2009 while teaching at BIITE, I became increasingly concerned that the quickly ageing and diminishing group of Marra speakers would disappear with few records of their knowledge, lives and language, despite there being an obvious degree of community interest and motivation for work to be done on Marra. The urgency of the situation became even more critical in 2008 when the operations of the Ngukurr Language Centre ceased after a productive ten-year period of delivering community-based projects on the community's languages, including Marra.

Through all this, I was strongly motivated to contribute to what would be one last “hurrah” for the Marra language and its few remaining speakers. It was clear that this was aligned with community wishes, thus adhering to another ethical guideline outlined by AIATSIS:

> Research outcomes should respond to the needs and interest of Indigenous people, including those who participate in the project. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2012: 12)

The research topic and subsequent methodology of this thesis was then framed around the underlying objective of working with the last speakers of Marra to document their language, and doing so in a way that would maximise community benefits and involvement.

Incidental to my own motives and community-related motives for incorporating a Marra documentation project into this study was the fact that nearly all prior research on the Marra language had been informed by Marra men (Hale 1959; Heath 1981). With the group of last speakers being mostly women, it represented a final opportunity to document Marra from women. In practical terms, I knew that working with the small group of remaining Marra speakers and their descendants who are interested in the language would be productive. I was familiar with most of the core group of Marra speakers and most of them demonstrated energy, skills and passion for documenting their language, which is captured in some of the biographies offered in Chapter 2.

1.3.3 Methodological Framework

Despite the foregrounding of ethical concerns in my methodological approach, I was not concerned that this would jeopardise the possibility of carrying out academically defensible research grounded in an appropriate theoretical framework. As well as ethical constraints, the incorporation of a Marra documentation project into this study also
partially dictated the theoretical framework that could be applied. As Himmelmann explains:

... a theoretical framework for language documentation should provide room for the active participation of native speakers. While the input of native speakers and other factors specific to a given setting is not completely unpredictable, it clearly limits the level of detail of a general framework for language documentation which can be usefully explored in purely theoretical terms. (Himmelmann 2006: 4)

This study is most closely associated with the fields of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, whose underpinnings can be characterised as such:

At the core of these approaches is the axiom that language and interaction create society and culture, and at the same time they are created by society and culture. (Eades 2013: 9)

Particular theoretical frameworks within sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics that have influenced this study include interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication, pioneered by Dell Hymes (e.g. Hymes 1974; Hymes and Gumperz 1972). Hymes' approach was partly inspired by a concern that linguists "were paying too much attention to language as an abstract system" (Fasold 1990: 39). Broadly, ethnography of communication "studies the way of speaking ... within a particular social group" (Eades 2013: 9) and aims to "expand linguistics so that the study of the abstract structure of syntax, phonology, and semantics would be only one component... A more complete linguistics would be concerned with how speakers go about using these structures as well" (Fasold 1990: 40). This approach "blended anthropology and linguistics and explored the links between culture, language and society" (Kral 2012: 7).

More recently, scholars like Hill (2006) and Childs, Good and Mitchell (2014) advocate for such methods to be applied to documentary linguistics. Childs, Good and Mitchell go further to promote the idea of going beyond focusing documentation efforts on an "ancestral code", suggesting that "approaches privileging one 'language' as ancestral are problematic, and potentially pernicious, in highly multilingual and fluid linguistic contexts" (ibid: 169).

A particularly influential Australian linguist who applies such frameworks is Diana Eades who, among a number of areas of sociolinguistic research, produced nuanced analyses of language use among Aboriginal people in South-East Queensland. These analyses revealed that the pragmatics of their English use had more in common with the pragmatics of traditional Aboriginal languages than with the English of non-Indigenous
middle-class English speakers (Eades 1983; 2013). A more recent Australian example of research under a similar framework is Inge Kral (2012) who uses practice-based ethnographic research to look at literacy, language and social practice among Ngaanyatjarra people in the Western Desert region of Central Australia.

Despite such frameworks informing this research, this thesis does not strictly fall within frameworks such as ethnography of communication. For example, this study is not explicitly concerned with analysing specific communicative events and is not restricted to observing natural spoken language. Yet frameworks like the ethnography of communication provide a foundation for this study, which builds upon years of what could be termed 'participant-observation' during the time I spent working in Ngukurr (and Minyerri) prior to this research. During those years, I had the opportunity to participate in and observe all facets of communication in the region, and internalise many aspects of communication in a Roper Kriol speaking community. In this thesis I use this approach as a theoretical foundation to then draw out descriptions of lexical and semantic features within specific domains, and also use additional research methods such as interviewing. As an example, the number of non-English derived Kriol verbs described in Chapter 4 – and the level of description offered – was only possible because of the extended periods of my own Kriol-speaking participation in community life over years prior, though it was then expanded significantly through recorded interviews and further participant-observation carried out during fieldwork.

Despite not reporting on communicative events as would occur in a typical interactional sociolinguistics study, I have still incorporated extended examples of discourse and conversational data throughout this thesis in a way which is typical of such methodologies. This provides the reader with a sense of how Marra and Kriol speakers actually talk, going some way to filling a common gap in linguistic description and documentation identified by scholars such as Kulick who, in reference to studies of Melanesian languages, said:

...it is still quite rare to be given extensive data about how Melanesians actually talk to one another. ... Everyday, mundane talk is usually not examined. (Kulick 1992: 22)

To investigate the transfer of knowledge across the language shift from Marra to Kriol, I have not focused specifically on spontaneous interaction but rather investigated the lexicon used by the two groups, the semantics of these lexemes, the cultural phenomena they relate to and underlying systems of categorisation surrounding these semantic domains. With Kriol speakers, this was done mainly through loosely-structured
discussions and interviews (benefiting from my existing knowledge base) in which I enquired about specific word meanings, categorisation, knowledge and lexemes within specific semantic domains. In total, over thirteen hours of Kriol recordings were created for this study.

As already mentioned, a Marra documentation project was also incorporated into this study. The research I did with Marra speakers involved creating new recordings totalling over twenty-six hours, including:

- Oral texts on topics determined by individual speakers or by group consensus
- Oral texts on topics determined by the researcher
- Group discussion of topics or specific semantic domains determined by the researcher, often using stimuli (usually books, images)
- and, rarely, elicitation with groups of 2–3 speakers.

There are also recordings of Marra speakers giving short narratives in Marra and a parallel narrative in Kriol which allow for direct comparison of the two languages.

In addition to creating recordings, a considerable portion of fieldwork was dedicated to transcribing Marra recordings and adding careful Kriol translations. The bulk of this annotation work was done during fieldwork in collaboration with Marra speakers in an effort to maximise "the benefit of tapping directly into native-speaker intuition" (Granites and Laughren 2001: 157). This helped to ascertain lexical and semantic differences and consistencies between the languages. The transcription and translation was not only of new recordings created but also of recordings repatriated from the AIATSIS archives. In particular, a series of previously untranslated and untranscribed Marra texts recorded by Ken Hale over 50 years prior were a great addition to the corpus used in this study. Two elderly women in Ngukurr, Betty Roberts and Freda Roberts, made absolutely crucial contributions to the work carried out on Marra and they deserve much more recognition than the few mentions in this thesis can give them.

In total, I spent around seven months carrying out fieldwork in Ngukurr which included semi-regular trips to Numbulwar. Additionally, I spent around a year working from Katherine, Northern Territory, the main service town in the region, carrying out fieldwork.

1.3.4 Community outcomes

Given the above discussion of the effort taken to carry out ethically sound research built on a foundation of community relationships and involvement, it is also worth mentioning
the community benefits and positive outcomes that this research enabled. These outcomes have been personally rewarding and contributed significantly to making the undertaking of PhD research a worthwhile venture. They are made explicit here as an example of the positive outcomes that many academic linguists yield which are incidental to their core research, yet they are rarely discussed in research outputs and too often overlooked. They are mentioned here in response to Krauss’ landmark challenge for a rethinking of our discipline in which he asked (among other things) “how many academic departments encourage applied linguistics in communities for the support of endangered languages?” (Krauss 1992: 10). By not making applied linguistic and community development contributions explicit, linguists risk doing the discipline a disservice by making linguistics appear less community-focused or socially-useful than it really is.

The major achievement my community involvement led to while undertaking PhD fieldwork was contributing to the establishment and development of the Ngukurr Language Centre Aboriginal Corporation. When I commenced fieldwork in 2010, the Katherine Language Centre, which had overseen the functions of the Ngukurr Language Centre facility until 2008, was in disarray. Elders and community members shared concerns with me that no language revitalisation activities had been taking place and the local language centre was unused and in danger of being coopted for other purposes. Over the course of the following two years I assisted them in-kind to develop and incorporate as a registered Aboriginal Corporation, secure the use of the Ngukurr Language Centre facility, apply for funding and then recruit staff and restart community language activities. The support I provided was mostly administrative – grant-writing and acquittals, bookkeeping, HR and staff recruitment, reporting, governance support and so on. In just eighteen months, the organisation became fully operational and could employ a full-time coordinator (thereby reducing my level of assistance). At the time of writing, the Centre continues to grow, now employing one full-time non-Indigenous coordinator, two local part-time language workers and dozens of local language consultants. They have re-introduced traditional language classes in the local school and driven a range of language documentation and revitalisation projects and activities. These achievements mean that community-based language activities are occurring daily in Ngukurr through a locally-controlled facility, and are not reliant on a visiting linguist as is often the case with academic linguistic fieldworkers. While I am pleased to have contributed to the development of the Ngukurr Language Centre, its success to date is due to the unerring drive of elders and language workers in Ngukurr to work on and advocate for their traditional languages.
As mentioned already, this study also resulted in a Marra documentation project which contributes to the depth and quantity of recordings of the language in existence. I designed the documentation project to ensure a high level of community involvement and benefit. A small grant of around $AUD14,000 from the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) assisted with this. Around 80% of the grant went directly to Marra people for their work on the project during recording and transcription/translation sessions. Being able to do transcription in-situ not only contributed to better transcription and translation but also increased community involvement and training components of the documentation project. A number of Marra people have gone on to receive formal and informal training and have typically been able to improve their fluency and/or literacy skills in the language.

Other incidental projects and collaborations were also made possible via the present study. Most notably, the Marra documentation team and I contributed to a song documentation project delivered by a regional arts organisation (Barkly Arts). We transcribed and translated seventeen short songs in Marra which were incorporated into an acclaimed album release featuring four Aboriginal languages of Borroloola. The album, *Ngambala Wiji li-Wunungu* (2013), by Shellie Morris and the Borroloola Songwomen, was nominated for and won national awards.¹

These examples of the benefits that this PhD research has brought to the researched communities are discussed in some detail in order to highlight the positive outcomes that academic linguists can bring to communities in their fieldsite. While the scale of the benefits I have described here are not unique or even rare complements to academic research, they are arguably enhanced by foregrounding ethical and community concerns in the research methodology, as was done in this study.

### 1.4 About Marra

The traditional lands of the Marra people occupy a coastal strip of land on the Gulf of Carpentaria coast, south of the Roper River. In this area of Australia, large land areas are identified with particular sociolinguistic groupings and so names such as Marra “can be used in reference to languages and to large area with which, in theory at least, speakers

¹ Accolades for the album include 2012 National Music In Communities Award, awarded by the Music Council of Australia and winner at the 2012 National Indigenous Music Awards in the Traditional Music category.
of that language should live and have totemic affiliations” (Merlan 1981: 141). Merlan also pointed out that in this region:

... native language competence, as well as inclination to use the native languages, are declining rapidly among younger people, but the sociolinguistic identity of the country... persists. (Merlan 1981: 145)

At the time of submitting this thesis in 2015, there are perhaps only four fully-fluent speakers on Marra, half as many as there were when I started this study in 2010. They are all elderly people living not on Marra land, but in Numbulwar community. The last two fully-fluent Marra speakers in Ngukurr passed away before this study was completed (see §2.4.5.1 and §2.4.5.3). It appears that no-one who has grown up in a mission or remote community has acquired Marra as a first language. Hence when Marra people ceased living self-sufficiently on Marra land in about the 1950s an irreversible shift took place. Nevertheless, a small number of adults aged 45 and older have good to excellent passive knowledge of the language and, as the present study shows, around 200–300 commonly known lexemes in Roper Kriol are borrowed from Marra (often cognate with other substrate languages too). The future of the Marra language being used as a complete linguistic system, however, is precarious.

Chapter Two provides greater detail on sociolinguistic aspects, including a sociohistorical account of Marra people, their land and language. This section focuses on formal linguistic aspects of the language that belongs to Marra land and people.

1.4.1 Previous work on the Marra language

Only one linguist, Jeffrey Heath, has documented and described the Marra language in detail. He published a comprehensive Boasian trilogy (in one bound volume) in 1981 after carrying out extensive fieldwork on several languages in the Roper River Region in the mid 1970s. Heath’s volume includes a significant dictionary of around 1800 items, including a short English finder list and collations of items into several semantic domains, mostly biological. The collection of 42 texts were provided by three male speakers, Anday, Manguji (Mack Riley) and Nangurru (Johnnie). Their stories are mostly ethnographic narratives, including a number of detailed totemic narratives (creation or Dreaming stories). The grammatical description is comprehensive and appears to be largely accurate. Heath mastered Marra’s complex verbal system which includes suppletive paradigms, complex morphology and morphophonemic processes that would intimidate any non-Marra speaker. His description of Marra has been an absolutely vital aid to this study and my attempts to grasp the complexities of the language.
Before Heath, only three scholars had collected linguistic data on Marra. Arthur Capell sketched grammatical notes and a wordlist of nearly 400 items in the late 1930s or early 1940s (Capell, n.d.). Margaret Sharpe, who focused primarily on the neighbouring language Alawa, documented some Marra at the Roper River Mission in the 1960s. The largest contribution came from Ken Hale who spent a week with Marra speakers in Borroloola in 1959. Hale’s handwritten fieldnotes consist of over 750 pages of elicited words, sentences and some short narrative material based on the information that Hale’s main informant Dulu gave him (Hale 1959). He also recorded short narratives with several other speakers that were apparently never transcribed or translated until I was able to repatriate these recordings during fieldwork in 2010 and work on them with the Marra team who assisted me with this study.

Since Heath’s volume was published in 1981, the energy put into the Marra language has come predominantly from the community level. In the 1980s, a few Marra people attended language courses at the School of Australian Linguistics, later to become Batchelor College (Black and Breen 2001). Around the same time, many adults in Ngukurr completed teacher training, culminating in the local school having local teachers leading each class. Part of their teacher training included language studies. While Ngukurr’s school did not have a formal Marra language program at this time, having all local teaching staff did result in an increase in local cultural content in education as well as advancing a social movement of self-determination (Daniels and Daniels 1991; Rogers 1991). Also in the 1980s, a local media association, Nganiyurlma Media Association, was active in documenting endangered knowledge, songs and languages in audio and video formats, recording several hours of Marra narrative and conversation.

This movement towards community-driven activity also contributed to several Ngukurr residents being founding members of the Katherine Language Centre (mentioned above, officially known as Diwurruwurrurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation), established in the mid-1990s. This organisation acted as a conduit for community-based language documentation, resourcing and education programs delivered across the greater Katherine Region. Marra speakers contributed strongly to the centre’s activities. Most notably, in 2002 Marra elders assisted linguist Ruth Singer to rework Heath’s Marra dictionary. Using a more user-friendly orthography, they produced an alphabetical version and an illustrated semantically-themed dictionary, both of which were only published locally (Singer and Diwurruwurrurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation 2002a; 2002b). Other activities resulted in smaller outputs such as basic readers, picture books and
teaching resources, school programs and adult education courses, plus several hours of audio recordings.

Through their heavy involvement in the Katherine Language Centre, Marra elders and other senior people in Ngukurr successfully lobbied for the organisation to establish the Ngukurr Language Centre, a small facility based in the community acting as a hub for language work and local archive/resource centre. It was built at the turn of the millennium, originally as an annexe of Katherine Language Centre, but as mentioned above was later re-established as an independent Ngukurr-based organisation. The Ngukurr Language Centre facility has enabled several academic linguists to form collaborative working relationships with Marra people and other senior community members. The only academic research on Marra fruiting from this was some work by Brett Baker on coverbs and complex predicates (e.g. Amberber, Baker and Harvey, 2007; Baker 2008).

1.4.2 Grammatical and other linguistic features of Marra

Marra is a non-Pama-Nyungan language considered to be part of a family of only three languages (Wurm 1971), the others being Alawa, situated inland and to the west, and Warndarrang which is coastal, located immediately north (see Map 2–1). The status of Warndarrang as a Marran language is not clear-cut however. It has been described as a fringe member of either the Marran family (Heath 1978a) or the Gunwinyguan family (Harvey 2012). For the purposes of this study, Warndarrang is considered to be part of the Marran family, along with Marra and Alawa, following classifications such as those by Wurm (1971) and Heath (1978a).

Marra’s phonemic inventory is more conservative than any of its neighbours but is fairly standard for an Australian language. It has a three-vowel system (not attested in any neighbouring inland languages e.g. Alawa, Ngalakgan, Ngandi) and no phonemic length contrast (such as that found in Nunggubuyu, Ngandi and Yolŋu languages). There are no interdental consonants as found in Yanyuwa and languages to the north such as Ngandi, Nunggubuyu and Yolŋu languages nor is there a phonemic length or voicing contrast in stops such as that found in Yolŋu languages and all Gunwinyguan languages occurring west of Nunggubuyu. The consonant inventory is shown in Table 1–1, presented in the Marra orthography:
The three-way vowel system features \(a\), \(i\) and \(u\) and the diphthongs \(aw\), \(uy\) and \(ay\). Vowel length is not contrastive.

Unlike Gunwinyguan languages which are mostly agglutinative, Marra has complex morphophonemic processes, most obvious in complex verb structures. Most notably, certain phonological features of uninflecting coverbs govern a variety of initial morphophonemic processes on pronominal prefixes that immediately follow. These pronominal prefixes are the first element of a fused inflecting or auxiliary verb that minimally contains pronominal and TAM information. In some cases, inflected verbs do not require a coverb (hence no processes affect the initial consonant), for example:

(1.1) **wala-rlini**  
Burrunju  
3PL-go;PST  
place name  
They went (to) Burrunju.

[Johnny_19740600RITHAMARRA0001Barnjador0002NUMjh01_00:36:21]

Many or most of this closed set of inflecting verbs are suppletive paradigms. For example, the TAM inflected verb suffix in (1.1), \(-rlini\), has suppletive forms such as the future tense form \(-yurra\) and the past tense form with punctiliar aspect, \(-(a)nga\), shown in (1.2):

(1.2) **mingi wanga**  
now  
3SG:go;PST;PUNCT  
S/he just went.

[MT_20110113MARRA0001NGUgd02_00:01:05]

In complex verbs that feature uninflecting coverbs preceding the inflected verb, sound changes in the following pronominal prefix often result. These sound changes are not always regular due to differing underlying historical forms: while the pronominal prefixes **wala-** and **wa-** listed in (1.1) and (1.2) contain the same initial consonant, phonological processes governed by coverbs can affect the initial \(w\)- differently. In (1.3), the initial \(w\)- of the 3rd person plural prefix hardens to a bilabial stop when preceded by

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*Table 1–1: Phoneme inventory of Marra*
an uninflecting coverb ending in an alveolar stop. In the same phonological environment in (1.4), the w- of the singular 3rd person plural prefix hardens to a velar stop:

(1.3) **Nad-balarlini wala wul-gariyimarr manimigi na-wujuja-yurr**
run-3PL:go;PST the[PL] PL-man supposedly M[OBL]-cave-ALL
Supposedly, all the Aboriginal people ran into the cave.

(1.4) **Gaya bugi gana ngambud-ganga warriya**
there EMPH REL be_submerged-3SG:go;PST;PUNCT poor_thing
It went under (submerged) right there, the poor guys.

Other pronominal prefixes are affected by other process such as lenition, as can be seen when comparing (1.5) and (1.6) below. In (1.6) the initial n- of the pronominal prefix is deleted when preceded by a lateral-final coverb:

(1.5) **ganagu warri-niwiyurrayi gana nguwarri**
NEG return-1PLEXCL:go;PST;POT REL east;ALL
We never went back to the east.

(1.6) **ganagu gal-niwiyurrayi dijei**
NEG grow-1PLEXCL:go;PST;POT this_way
We didn’t grow up here.

The above examples provide a small sample of complex verb structures in Marra as well as examples of morphophonemic processes. As will become evident in Chapter 4, the nature of complex verbs in Marra has contributed to the prevalence of Marra-derived verbs in Kriol. For a fuller description of Marra verbs and other linguistic features, readers should refer to Heath (1981), which includes full descriptions of 33 phonological processes, verbal morphology, the TAM system and outlines the 38 inflectional verb paradigms.

Other features of the Marra language that are distinct from neighbouring languages and/or most Australian languages include:

- Gender marking on human nouns only, in contrast to Ngalakgan, Ngandi and Nunggubuyu which have five ‘genders’ (noun classes) that are also encoded in pronominal prefixes
• No gender marking on pronominal prefixes, in contrast to Alawa which does not have noun classes but has female and male 3rd person verbal inflection
• Determiners marked for gender (three) and number
• Complex kin terminology including features such as Omaha skewing, suppletive possessed forms and suppletive dyadic terms (described in further detail in Chapters 5)
• No gender-based dialects such as those found in Yanyuwa (Bradley 1998).

1.5 ABOUT KRIOL

Kriol is the name of the English-based creole spoken throughout a large area of Northern Australia. The geographical area in which it is spoken is roughly associated with areas where the pastoral industry flourished in the late 1800s/early 1900s. The establishment of the pastoral industry in the Katherine and Kimberley regions of Northern Territory, where Kriol is most prevalent today, is also associated with frontier violence, the ‘dispersal’ (a euphemism for massacring) of local Aboriginal people and indentured labour on pastoral stations. The sociohistorical context of the introduction of a pidgin and its subsequent creolisation into Kriol has been described in most detail in John Harris’ *Northern Territory Pidgins and the Origin of Kriol* (1986).

The number of speakers of Kriol is not entirely clear. When the *Kriol Baibul* was launched in 2007, religious organisations estimated the number at 30,000, including L2 speakers, across the entire dialect chain (ABC Radio National 2007). It is unclear how this figure was arrived at and it may be an enthusiastic appraisal, perhaps exaggerated to increase the purported reach of the Bible translation project. On the lower end of the scale, the 2011 Australian Census, found there to be 6,781 Kriol speakers (Australian Bureau of Statistics and SBS 2012) but this is skewed because of self-reporting as well as the phrasing of the Census question which asks not what languages respondents are proficient in but only which language they speak at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). Nevertheless, Census data still shows that Kriol is the second most spoken language in the home in the Northern Territory behind English. It is difficult to arrive at an accurate figure of the number of Kriol speakers across the entire dialect chain, but it is possible to approximate the number of people who speak the Roper dialect of Kriol.

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3 Self-reporting results in under-reporting for reasons including the language having reduced prestige, lack of perceived difference to English and because some attribute the label ‘Kriol’ with a particular dialect different to their own.
natively by tabulating the population of the main communities where that dialect is spoken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngukurr</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urapungana</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minyerri</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilkminggan</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbulwar</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2398</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1-2: Aboriginal population in Roper Kriol speaking communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013)*

In these communities, residents commonly label themselves as Kriol speakers and are quite content to do so. While it does not carry the status or prestige that English or ancestral Aboriginal languages do, Kriol speakers in these communities generally do not have overt negative attitudes towards the language. Further sociolinguistic and sociohistorical information on Kriol and Kriol speakers is offered in Chapter 2.

1.5.1 *Previous work on the Kriol language*

The recognition (and subsequent naming) of Kriol as an independent language system did not occur until the late 1960s and early 1970s when missionaries wanting to translate the Bible and preach using vernacular languages realised that in Ngukurr the traditional language ecology was complex and heritage languages were rapidly falling out of use. The best option then was to use what was known until that point as *pijin, pijn Inglish* or *Ropa pijin* (Sandefur 1979: 7; Seiffert 2011: 138–139). In order to undertake these tasks, missionaries and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) linguists were key in developments such as naming the language, developing an orthography and producing a grammatical description (Sandefur 1979). It should be noted that some academic linguists also contributed to the early description and recognition of Kriol, such as precursory work by Margaret Sharpe (1975). Another key development in the early work on Kriol was the establishment of a Kriol-English bilingual education program at Barunga School in 1976 (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2009). Over the course of the

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4 Data from 2011 Census, based upon the “Indigenous Area” category which presents data specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This data was sourced by searches within the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census “QuickStats” function (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013).
program's 16 year existence, a significant number of educational resources in Kriol were created.\footnote{Many of which are now being made available digitally via the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages project: laal.cdu.edu.au/}

The major descriptive works of this early era were Sandefur's concise description (185 pages) of the Barunga-Ngukurr variety (Sandefur 1979) and Hudson's work on a dialect from the Kimberley region, *Grammatical and Semantic Aspects of Fitzroy Valley Kriol* (Hudson 1983). Both works were produced by SIL and while they are not exhaustive descriptions, they have made immense contributions to the description of Kriol and retain importance. Similarly, the Kriol dictionary produced by SIL (SIL-AAIB 1986; 1996) and later revised by Lee (2004) is a significant but imperfect work. In recent years, Nicholls revisited some of the earlier description of the Roper dialect of Kriol, providing a general review of its grammar and a careful analysis of noun phrase structure (Nicholls 2009).

Other academic work on Kriol has focused on more specific topics. Rhydwen's thesis discussed the use of Kriol literacy among Kriol speakers (mostly in Barunga and Daly River) (Rhydwen 1996). Much of Munro's work has focused on topics in creolistics, discussing processes of creolisation (Munro 2000) and analysing substrate influences using a specific theoretical framework, the Transfer Constraints approach (Munro 2004). Harris carefully documented the sociohistorical contexts surrounding the introduction of pidgin and its subsequent creolisation in the Roper River region (Harris 1986). Nicholls (mentioned above) examined referring expressions in Roper Kriol and more recently, Baker has reanalysed the obstruent inventory of Roper Kriol, further advancing the description of the phonology of Kriol (at least, the Roper dialect) (Baker, Bundgaard-Nielsen and Graetzer 2014).

Recent work on mixed languages including Meakins' work on Gurindji Kriol (Meakins 2011), O'Shannessy's work on Light Warlpiri (O'Shannessy 2005) and Disbray's work on Wumpurrarni English (Disbray 2009), while relevant to this thesis, do not necessarily constitute work on Kriol as an independent language system.

\subsection*{1.5.2 Dialectal Variation}

Numerous scholars, and certainly every Kriol speaker, acknowledge that dialectal variation exists across the broad region recognised as the Kriol speaking area. Sandefur and Harris described variation as "differences in phonology, lexicon, grammar and social
attitudes” (1986: 181). Munro “go(es) further by saying that these differences are in part, the result of the different substrate language environments in the varieties are found” (2000: 249). Munro offers seven dialectal areas:

1. Roper
2. Beswick/Barunga
3. Eastern Kimberley (Fitzroy Crossing/Halls Creek)
4. Daly River
5. Turkey Creek/Wyndham/Kununurra
6. Barkly
7. Victoria River.

As mentioned above, Hudson (1983) described the Fitzroy Valley variety – (3) in the above list – in detail and the grammatical description provided by Sandefur (1979) purports to represent the Banyili (now known as Barunga) dialect (2) and the Ngukurr or Roper dialects (1). The Kriol Dikshenri also attempted to account for dialectal variation and each headword is labelled according to whether they are attested in one or more of four dialects: Barunga, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Ngukurr (i.e. Roper) (Lee 2004).

Despite attempts to characterise and differentiate between different Kriol dialects, in many cases divisions are relatively arbitrary (note that Munro’s seven-way distinction groups Halls Creek with Fitzroy Crossing while the Dictionary’s four-way distinction has them separated). Hints of arbitrariness in defining varieties are understandable given that the Kriol speaking area constitutes a “geographical dialect continuum” (Chambers and Trudgill 1998: 6) whose variability has never been systemically analysed. Attempts to classify varieties of Kriol also generally do not distinguish between perceived variation – i.e. taking an emic perspective – and etic perspectives of linguists. For example, Kriol speakers in the Victoria River area (variety 7 in Munro’s list) do not label their language as Kriol, but associate the term with speakers of the Barunga and Roper dialects. This also happens among residents of Borroloola whose variety is not included in the above classifications, but Ngukurr residents do recognise them as Kriol speakers. Example 1.7 shows a Kriol speaker from Ngukurr discussing ba alabat Kriol ‘their Kriol’ and imitating a Borroloola speaker (bolded) by adopting their accent and using variants of their dialect such as i instead of im (3rd person singular pronoun), de: instead of ja ‘there’ and marluga instead of olmen ‘senior male’:
I hear those Borroloola guys, they speak Kriol, but their-

You hear their Kriol, hey, like:

"I gon ova de::, got- garri..."
S/he’s gone over there, with- with-

"I gon ova de: dat sambodi, yu tal det marluga de::"
S/he’s gone over there that person, tell that old man there"

A careful study of dialectal variation in Kriol speaking communities is an important project for future consideration.

This thesis, however, focuses on the dialect of Kriol spoken in the Ngukurr community which is most often labelled as the Roper dialect, or Roper Kriol, named after the Roper River Mission where creolisation took place, which in turn is named after the largest river flowing through the region. Readers should note that throughout the thesis Kriol data and analysis pertains specifically to the Roper Kriol variety, despite it often being given the more generic label "Kriol".

1.5.3 INTERGENERATIONAL VARIATION

Another aspect pertinent to Kriol is the question of intergenerational variation and whether there is evidence of decreolisation. Sharpe and Sandefur (1977) originally considered decreolisation to be evident, but after further research Sandefur (1982) argued that this was not the case. Sharpe also subsequently hypothesised that Kriol "has maintained stability in basic grammar" and that vocabulary shift matches that of any other modern language over an eighty-year period (Sharpe 1985: 180). More recently, Baker et al. found that, phonologically at least, Roper Kriol exhibited a high degree of stability, and that "the vast majority of lexical items have a single, canonical, lexical form" (Baker, Bundgaard-Nielsen, and Graetzer 2014: 308). My own research supports the view that decreolisation is not occurring, which will become apparent throughout the body of this thesis, in particular Chapters 3 and 4 which reveal a greater prevalence of non-English based lexemes being used by young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr than has previously been documented.

With each generation in Ngukurr, language change is evident (predictably), but there is evidence that changes bifurcate. Some aspects see English-derived lexemes and structures diverging further from their origins whereas other recently adopted lexemes
and structures see the younger speakers’ Kriol moving closer to Standard English than the Kriol spoken by older generations. To illustrate this, consider two of Kriol’s demonstrative pronouns, which Munro lists as *dijan* /dɪjan/ (proximal) and *darran* /d̪aran/ (distal) (2004: 155), derived from the English etymons ‘this one’ and ‘that one’ respectively. In the Kriol of young people, *dijan* is very commonly reduced to the more English-like *dis*/dɪs/ whereas *darran* undergoes regular syllable reduction to the less English-like form *than*/d̪an/.

1.5.4 **Grammatical and Other Linguistic Features of Kriol**

The phonology of Kriol is influenced by English and the traditional languages of the area. All phonemes found in traditional languages of the region are also found in Kriol, supplemented by a series of voiceless fricatives that were not originally used in the area. The consonant inventory is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nasal</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>rn</td>
<td>ny</td>
<td>ng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>tj</td>
<td>k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>sh</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>rlr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rr</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1–3: Phoneme inventory of Kriol*

The phonemic inventory given in Table 1–3 is not a direct reproduction of either of the differing inventories offered by Sandefur (1979), Munro (2004) or Nicholls (2009), each of which have problems as noted by Baker, Bundgaard-Nielsen, and Graetzer (2014). The inventory above also varies slightly from the analysis by Baker et al. by (a) listing /j/ and /tʃ/ as stops rather than fricatives and (b) retaining retroflex consonants. These amendments are based on my own perceptions and have not been verified by acoustic studies, but – to take retroflexion as an example – I perceive retroflex consonants in some common Kriol words such as:

- *barn, barnim* ‘burn’
- *gardì* ‘goodness!’
- *anggurl* ‘uncle’
As is typical of all creole languages, Kriol is a largely isolating language, but it does have a small and frequently used set of aspectual and mood verbal suffixes. It is an English-lexified creole but mutually unintelligible with English, distinguished by having its own grammatical structures, several hundred substrate-derived lexemes, a unique phoneme inventory (as shown above) and distinct pragmatics. Many English-derived lexemes have semantics distinct from their etymons due to processes of relexification, with an obvious examples being *bingga* (from ‘finger’), which refers to the whole hand and, like traditional Aboriginal languages, does not distinguish between fingers and the rest of the hand.

As mentioned above, several attempts at describing the grammar of Kriol have been made but none are exhaustive. Due to space restrictions and the anthropological slant of this study, a detailed grammatical description of Kriol will not be attempted here either, although a number of previously undescribed features will be identified throughout the thesis, expanding the available description of the language. Readers should consult Nicholls (2009) and Sandefur (1979) as the best available sketches of the grammar of Roper Kriol. Major grammatical features that distinguish Kriol from English are summarised below.

The categories found in the pronominal system have much more in common with local traditional languages than with English, despite Kriol forms all having English etymons. This is shown in Table 1–4 which compares Kriol free pronouns to the intransitive pronominal prefixes in Marra. Kriol maintains a three-way person distinction (singular, dual and plural) and has separate inclusive and exclusive forms in the dual and plural categories.6

---

6 Nicholls (2009: 75) found “little or no distinction” between first person plural pronouns *mela* and *wi* which are recognised as distinguishing inclusive (*wi*) and exclusive (*mela*) elsewhere in the literature. However, my own data shows that this distinction does exist. For example, a young woman said to me, while being recorded: *En yu garra kambek pikima mela indit?* And you’ll come back and pick us up, won’t you?, clearly showing the pronoun *mela* as exclusive. To use *wi* in that instance would be ungrammatical. See also the use of *mela* in Example 7.18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marra</td>
<td>Kriol</td>
<td>Marra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person inclusive</td>
<td>nga-</td>
<td>ai/mi</td>
<td>na-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person exclusive</td>
<td>nirri-</td>
<td>minbala</td>
<td>niwi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>ni-</td>
<td>yu</td>
<td>nurru-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>wa/-wu-</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>warra-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1–4: Correspondence in pronominal categories between Marra and Kriol*

With nominals, indicating number and definiteness is optional and determiners have a different range of functions than in English. Nicholls (2009; 2013), for example, provides an excellent description of *det* (from the English ‘that’) which functions as a determiner, “an article with discourse-determined functions – as an anaphoric and recognitional article” (Nicholls 2009: 119). Kriol has only a small set of prepositions and lacks the case morphology found in all local traditional languages, but Sandefur shows that Kriol uses adverbs to modify prepositional phrases, allowing the language to make a similar range of distinctions to those found in traditional languages (see Sandefur 1979: 143–160). Example 1.8 shows a Kriol translation of a Marra utterance where the locative/allative suffix *-yurr* is translated with the preposition *la* and the prepositional phrase in both instances is modified by *yilijili/wansaid* ‘along the side/laterally’:

(1.8) yimbirri wayburri7 gana gal-arlindu yilijili
north;ALL south;ALL REL grow-3SG:go;PRS laterally
na-walba-yurr
M-river-LOC
Dijei tharrai im gro, wansaid la riba. [KRIOL]
It grows everywhere, *alongside* rivers. [ENGLISH]

Kriol verbs are the most morphologically complex part of the language. One obvious feature distinguishing them from English is the marking of transitivity on English-derived verbs, a common feature in other English-lexified creoles in the Pacific region (Keesing 1988: 119–123). In Kriol, transitivity is usually marked with the suffix *-im* (sometimes, *-um* or, rarely, *-it*) which is commonly reduced to *-i* in casual speech in word

7 Here, *yimbirri wayburri* – literally ‘northwards southwards’ – is an idiomatic expression not referring to those directions but rather meaning ‘all over the place’ or ‘everywhere’.
final position. The example in (1.9) shows both a complete -im transitive marker in gajim 'get' and a deleted final -m in abu(m) 'have':

(1.9) Thei gajim than, wen yu abu' sowa
3PL get:TR that when 2SG have:TR sore
They get that (medicine), when you have sores.

[20130507KRIOLdwNGUgd01_00:06:07]

Tense is marked with particles that precede the verb, however contractions are increasingly prevalent. The contraction imin (3SG:PST, from im+bin), leading to the merger of pronoun plus tense particle was reported in the earliest descriptions of Kriol (see Sandefur 1979: 127) and is now so common that the uncontracted form is virtually unheard of (at least in the Roper variety).

Working with Kriol-speaking young adults in the present study presented further examples of emerging contractions in casual speech. Future tense is marked with the particle garra and this can also be reduced to –rra when following at least some vowel final pronouns as in (1.10)

(1.10) bat ai-rra, ai-rra gubek jeya, ai gu stap la
but 1SG-FUT, 1SG-FUT return there 1SG go stay LOC
main gagu na, so, ai irrimbat alabat, so ai
my MoMo EMPH so 1SG listen:PROG 3PL so 1SG
gin tok langgus du
can talk language too
But I'll, I'll go back there, I'll stay with my maternal grandmother, so I'm listening to them, so I can speak (an Aboriginal) language too.

[DR_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01_00:03:08]

Negative constructions in Kriol also use a particle preceding the verb: most commonly nomo (typically pronounced numu in Roper Kriol) which is used in simple negative constructions, as in:

(1.11) Na mela numu yusu’ thanja na
Nah 1PLEXCL NEG use:TR that:there now
No, we don’t use that anymore.

[DR_20120308KRIOLdrkmNGUgd01_00:25:29]

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The –rra future tense suffix is described as a Kriol borrowing in Light Warlpiri by O'Shannessy (2005) who mentions that it occurs in Kriol speaking areas like Elliott and Beswick but it has not been described before in Roper Kriol or carefully described by any Kriol scholars.
Again, new and frequently used contractions have arisen featuring this particle, when occurring with the past tense marker bin. Kriol speakers regularly contract the negative marker nomo/numu and past marker bin to nimin, to which they then regularly prefix a contracted pronoun as in animin ‘I didn’t’ (1SG:NEG:PST). Some young Kriol speakers perceive such constructions as a complete word. This surprising finding arose while I was supporting a young Kriol speaker to transcribe a recording, who asked “How do you spell /d̪animin/?” At that stage I did not comprehend that she was referring to a contraction thanimin (3PL:NEG:PST, from thei+nomo+bin) which she perceived as one word. I have since found that the –nimin contraction to be widespread, with examples given in (1.12) and (1.13)⁹, the latter example featuring a self-correction that contrasts the non-contracted negative form used in non-past with the contracted form that is used with past tense:

(1.12) Animin ja
1SG:NEG:PST there
I wasn’t there.

(1.13) Mela nimin- mela nomo sabi medisin
1PLEXCL NEG:PST- 1PLEXCL NEG know medicine
We didn’t- we don’t know (about) (bush) medicine.

Contractions are also used in some modal constructions. Nicholls identifies a past irrealis suffix –a, derived from a desiderative modal verb andi (2009: 31), creating forms such as imina, derived from im+bin+andi (3SG:PST:DESID). This is also commonly attested, as in:

(1.14) Nunggubuyu basis Ropamob thebina bigis fait
Nunggubuyu versus Ngukurr:COLL 3PL:PST:IRR very_big fight
jis oba futbul.
just over football
The Nunggubuyu (group) against the Ngukurr group were going to have a huge fight just over football.

A fuller list of auxiliary verbs, including modal verbs, is discussed in Sandefur (1979) and Nicholls (2009). Here, I have focused on contractions because they have been less well

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⁹ Despite both examples being labelled with the initials DR, they refer to two different, unrelated speakers – one male and one female, both under 30 years of age.
documented previously and may represent emerging innovations that could signify future changes to Kriol verbal morphology.

Verbal morphology in terms of aspectual and adverbial suffixes is already quite well described (Sandefur 1979: 117–122). Continuative or progressive aspect is indicated by the suffix –bat. Reduplication can also express this aspectual value, especially on intransitive verbs, but the function of reduplication in Kriol is more opaque than in other creoles. Prosody can also encode durative aspect by lengthening vowels and raising pitch. Adverbial suffixes on verbs as listed in Sandefur (1979: 118) are: –an (on), -ap (up), -at (out), -bek (back), -dan (down), -in (in), -op/-af (off), -(a)ran (around) and –(a)wei (away).

Syntactically, Kriol is more like English than local traditional languages, with a fairly inflexible SVO word order. Kriol speakers do have greater flexibility with word order however, for example Nicholls (2009) points out that in noun phrases adjectives can follow the head noun, by being added as a separate intonation unit (ibid: 50).

The bulk of Kriol’s lexicon is obviously derived from English, however lexical semantics are often not predictable, due to the prevalence of non-English derived forms and/or semantic ranges of English-derived lexemes that differ from that of their etymons. For example, breigim (from ‘break’) has a semantic range more closely related to that of substrate verbs such as mud in Marra. Mud and breigim both describe breaking events that specifically relate to removing a part from a whole. These verbs do not typically refer to events where an object remains whole but is rendered inoperable or ceases to function. Such events would likely be described by Kriol speakers as meigim nogud (glossed as make:TR bad, derived from ‘make no good’). The semantics of many non-English-based Kriol lexemes and their relationships to English-derived terms are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

It is the pragmatics of Kriol that is probably the area in which it shares fewest features with English and more with the original languages of the area. Eades argued that the pragmatics used by English-speaking Aboriginal people in South-East Queensland are typical of Aboriginal languages and "reflect continuities from traditional Aboriginal cultures. ... the importance of responsibilities to kin, the priority of social relationships, and the need for indirectness in interactions, are both reflected in, and continually created by, the ways in which people interact" (Eades 2013: 74–75). This is true also for

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10 See Steffensen (1979) for a discussion of reduplication in the Barunga variety of Kriol.
Kriol speakers (Nicholls 2013). Specific pragmatic features that are commonly used by many Aboriginal people who do not speak a traditional language relate to areas such as information seeking, person reference, indirectness, making and refusing requests, avoidance behaviour and seeking and giving reasons. These pragmatic aspects are discussed in some detail by scholars such as Eades (1983; 2013) and Nicholls (2009).

1.6 THESIS SYNOPSIS

This chapter has introduced the central question investigated in this thesis – what happens to the cultural knowledge of a group, as encoded in the lexicon of the language they speak, when they have gone through processes of language shift. The following chapters will explore this question through an investigation of the lexicon of Marra and its supplanting language, Kriol, and paying heed to the knowledge and experiences of the people who speak one or both of those languages. Chapter 2 places the study in its sociohistorical context, presenting a chronological account of historical events that have significantly affected the lives of Marra people since the arrival of Europeans. That chapter also profiles a number of key Marra people with the goal of individualising the sociohistorical discussion and acknowledging those who made key contributions to this study. Then, in the linguistic core of the thesis, I concentrate on three key domains in order to investigate loss and maintenance of cultural knowledge during language shift, as reflected in the lexicon of Marra and Kriol in particular.

The first domain looks at the lexical impact Marra has had on Kriol (Chapters 3 and 4): what lexemes have carried through and what this can tell us about cultural continuity and loss. Particular attention is paid to verbs (event categorisation) – a somewhat unexpected area in which Marra’s impact on Kriol is particularly salient. For instance, why is it that Marra verbs for seemingly mundane events such as ngarra ‘peep’, gulaj ‘nod’ and ngaja ‘ask for something’ persist in Kriol? The second domain examined is kinship, comparing kinterms and kin categories used by Marra and Kriol speakers (Chapter 5) where I describe a complex situation of loss, maintenance and innovation among Kriol speakers’ kinship terminology and usage. Here it is shown that aspects of the elegant system of kinterms used by Marra speakers have fallen out of use but Kriol speakers use kinterms prolifically, and have even recently added new terms – not from English but from some of the few remaining viable Aboriginal languages. Finally, practices and terminology relating to traditional (‘bush’) medicine are targeted as the third domain under examination (Chapters 6 and 7). Bush medicine is an area iconically linked to traditional knowledge and is a domain associated with senior people and elders rather than with young Kriol speakers. Again, my research uncovered expected instances
of loss of knowledge and diminished cultural practices, but a small quantitative study of bush medicine usage among young Kriol speakers found both a higher than expected level of use as well as taxonomic knowledge. Chapter 8 concludes the study by reviewing key examples of loss, maintenance and innovation across the language shift boundary that are identified in the thesis, as well as the new descriptive and documentary data presented in the thesis. Ultimately, I find that alongside expected instances of diminished cultural knowledge and corresponding collapsed or abandoned lexical and semantic ranges, the degree of maintenance and innovation exhibited among Kriol speakers suggests care is required when describing loss that results from language shift as this may cause negative perceptions among those caught on other side of the shift.

Finally and on a technical note, the presentation of linguistic data in this thesis, including glossing and the use of Conversational Analysis symbols, is discussed in the preliminary information (p. xix). An addendum to that is to mention that I have intentionally made sparing use of the International Phonetic Alphabet and instead made a conscious effort to render all data in practical orthographies. This increases the readability of data presented in this thesis to non-linguists, an effort to make it more accessible to people with ancestral ties to the Roper River Region in particular.
2 ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXTS

This chapter provides a sociohistorical and ethnographic overview of Marra people, language, culture and land, focusing particularly on the past 150 years when they have dealt with the permanent presence of English-speaking Munanga.11 This section contextualises the relationship between Marra and Kriol that is discussed throughout the thesis, exploring the personal, social and historical factors that have contributed to language shift and cultural change among Marra people. The research presented in this chapter informs subsequent chapters which are focused on linguistic data, comparing the ways Marra and Kriol speakers linguistically encode various aspects of their lives. By providing a comprehensive overview of the lives and history of Marra people here, I allow for a more critical analysis of the relationship between language shift and cultural change, embedding language shift in its social, historical and cultural context.

This chapter draws upon primary and secondary data. A number of Marra and Kriol speakers provided first-hand information during fieldwork between 2010 and 2012: accounts of historical events, themes and periods that they experienced themselves or had been told about by older relatives. This primary data complements information gathered from secondary sources which describe the same historical events and periods. As an independent body of research, this chapter offers a perspective not previously attested: a sociohistorical narrative focused specifically on Marra people. To date, historical, sociohistorical and sociolinguistic works relating to Marra people have typically grouped several sociolinguistic groups and have been based on broader regional geography (e.g. Roberts 2005), industry or institution such as pastoralism or missionary activities (e.g. Harris 1998) or along specific anthropological themes (e.g. Bern 1974; Edmonds 2007a). These perspectives merge distinct experiences of separate language groups into common, pan-group experiences relating to that theme. This chapter represents a first attempt at describing the life and history of Marra people from their perspective as a distinct cultural and linguistic group. By incorporating primary data gathered during recent fieldwork this chapter makes a valuable contribution to existing sociohistorical research that has been carried out in the area.

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11 In Marra, neighbouring languages and in Kriol, Munanga is used as a noun and adjective to mean usually "European" (often translated more casually as "white") or sometimes "non-Indigenous" (e.g. sometimes it is applied to Asian people or Aboriginal people with no traditional ties to the area and its people).
The chapter's core structure is chronological. Several historical periods are delineated, somewhat arbitrarily, according to theme: the pre-contact period (§2.1), the 'first-contact' period including development of the pastoral industry and widespread violence (§2.2), the establishment of the Roper River Mission (§2.3), the last decades of the mission (§2.4), the post-mission period (§2.5) and, lastly, some reflections on the contemporary life of Kriol-speaking Marra people who all now live in remote settlements of 500–1000 predominantly Aboriginal people from a range of language groups (§2.6).

Integrated into this chapter, in order to exemplify various themes, are biographic details and oral histories of Marra-speaking and Kriol-speaking individuals. In particular, §2.4.5 presents quite detailed biographies of key elders who were integral to this study and their stories provide evidence of several historical factors involved in language shift. Their biographies are also offered in an effort to go beyond usual practices of how key informants are represented in linguistic studies, lifting the main characters who populate this study out of the more common, and arguably more limiting, place in methodological discussions. This is an effort to better acknowledge the influential contributions that they make and better incorporate their knowledge and experience into analysis and findings. This also aligns with ethical research guidelines that say "it is also important to recognise the diversity of individuals and groups within communities" (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2012: 2) and partially addresses criticisms of the "inability of linguists to give primacy to language speakers" (Nakata 2007: 39).

The chapter summary then leads readers into subsequent chapters that focus on linguistic data, allowing readers to approach the data with a greater awareness of the context of cultural and linguistic changes that Marra people have gone through over the past century and a half.

2.1 BEFORE MUNANGA

In this section an attempt is made – as far as is possible – to describe the human geography of the Marra people and to sketch an account of what life may have been like for Marra people before Munanga arrived, an event which led to drastic and irreversible changes to the lives, language and ways of life of Marra people.

2.1.1 MARRA COUNTRY

The term Marra, as with names of neighbouring languages and language groups, is “used in reference to languages and to large areas with which, in theory at least, speakers of that language should live and have totemic affiliations” (Merlan 1981: 141). Essentially,
there is a close bond between land, language and identity (ibid). Marra land, or ‘country’, occupies a strip of land on the western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, roughly bounded by the Roper River to the north which is Warndarrang country and an area beyond the Limmen Bight River to the south beyond which is Yanyuwa country, or perhaps more accurately, prior to contact belonged to a barely known group called the Wilangarra (Heath 1981: 2). To the west, Marra country borders, most prominently, Alawa land. To the north-west, Marra country may have bordered the territory of Yugul people but the scant information on who the Yugul were makes its status as a social and geographic entity unclear (Baker 2010). To the south-west, Marra country probably nudges Binbin.ga country, but as predominantly coastal (or ‘saltwater’) people, relationships to inland (or ‘freshwater’ people) were perhaps less prominent.

Map 2–1: A view of pre-contact geography: location of Marra country and neighbouring languages/territories, plus specific sites named in this chapter

It is not known how long Marra people have lived on Marra country, or how long their language and its antecedents have been spoken in the area. Heath estimates that the population of Marra people prior to contact was around 150 (1978a: 17). Anecdotal evidence from early sources such as Leichhardt’s diary suggests Heath’s figure may be
conservative. Frequent encounters and evidence of human activity are prevalent, such as Leichhardt mentioning that while in Marra territories “the natives... seemed very numerous” (9/11/1845, Leichhardt 1847). There appears to be no evidence in oral history or in archaeological research of other groups living in the area prior to the Marra, nor of Marra people occupying other territories. To try to understand what may have happened on Marra land prior to them occupying it, it is true to say that the Creation stories of the Marra people are the most detailed sources of information available.

Marra land, according to Marra cosmology, is covered by the tracks of Dreamings and features or sites that are the result of or relate to activities of Dreamings. English terminology has various imperfect ways of labelling these entities and common terms include ‘creation beings’ and ‘totems’. Here the label ‘Dreaming’ is used, to be consistent with the Kriol term, drimin.12 The creation of Marra country was enacted by Dreamings traversing the land, manifesting their existence at specific sites and interacting with other Dreamings. As Elkin describes:

The heroic human beings and animals of the “Dreaming” moved under the surface of the earth as well as above and on it, for whatever be the Dreaming “power”, it was as potent in causing things to happen below, e.g. springs to bubble up, as on the surface where it gave form to river courses or mountains, ant-hills or pandanus clumps. (Elkin 1961: 203)

Note also that Dreaming is a cultural key concept and is not restricted to the past, despite creation events having a past-time reference. Rather, it is “an ever-present condition of existence” (Elkin 1961: 203) and has a core aspect of eternity tied to it. Descriptions of creation events that relate to Marra country were historically documented orally by Marra people through narratives and in song and performance used in ceremonies. Major Dreamings featured in Marra creation narratives include Gilyirring-gilyirring (often translated roughly as ‘Mermaid(s)’ by Marra people), Walulu (Wind or Whirlwind), Bandiyan (King Brown Snake), Wardabirr (Goanna), Gurrujardbunggu (Quiet snake, or Olive Python), Bubunarra (Black-headed python) and Ngurru (Catfish).13

12 The Kriol term drimin carries similar semantics to its Marra equivalent jijan. Both terms refer to totemic creation beings as well as their physical manifestations such as sites and topographic features related to their activities.

13 This list is by no means exhaustive; they are just a handful of a large number of Dreamings that are important to Marra people and some of the more salient ones.
In the past half century or so, a number of these narratives have been documented by Munanga in collaboration with Marra people. Capell (1960) documented a creation story of the Wardabirr (goanna) belonging to the Warndarrang people in which an unnamed narrator described its path, travelling upstream along the Roper River, skirting the northern part of Marra country. Detailed creation stories of Bandiyan (King Brown) and Ngurru (Catfish) were documented in Nunggubuyu, told by Nangurru (Johnnie), a Marra-speaking polyglot who worked with Jeffrey Heath in the 1970s (Heath 1980b). Heath also documented creation narratives in Marra, from Manguji (Mack Riley) and Nangurru; eleven texts are presented in Heath (1981), encompassing the activities of Dreamings such as Gurrujardbunggu, Gilyirring-gilyirring, Garrimarla (Taipan), Bubunarra, Walulu and Barlin.gama (Antelopine Wallaby). John Bradley worked with Marra elders from Borroloola to document over 150 sites in the Limmen Bight area on Marra country and their associated significance to relevant Dreamings (Bradley et al. 2009) and legal claims.
made by Marra people to gain legal title over their land have also resulted in the
documentation of information of the creation activities of Dreamings (Bern et al. 1980;
Olney 2002) although much of this is not publicly available.

While it is difficult to determine the actual boundaries of Marra country, creation stories
and the rich system of placenames indicate that the areas around the Towns River,
Limmen Bight River and the islands of Yumun.guni (Beatrice Island) and Gurrululinya
(Maria Island) were at the spatial core of Marra culture, language and spirituality. There
is no strong evidence of distinct named clans within Marra people although large estates
delineated by their semi-moieties are distinguished. Likewise, there is little or
no evidence of dialectal variation among Marra speakers.

2.1.2 SOME NOTES ON PRE-CONTACT LIFESTYLES

Marra people, tracts of Marra land, named sites on Marra land and every living thing of
importance to Marra people belong to one of four patrilineal semi-moieties: Mambali,
Murrungurn, Guyal or Burdal. The Dreamings mentioned in §2.1.1 also belong to one of
the semi-moieties and as a result estates on Marra land “ha(ve) the same semi-moietty
category as the ancestral beings associated with it” (Olney 2002: 19). Marra cosmology is
further summarised:

As the entire world and all in it are classified in the same way this binds the
natural and human worlds together. (Olney 2002: 17–18)

Marra people derive specific relationships and sets of obligations over entities (land,
people, ceremonies, living things) depending on their membership of a particular semi-
moiety. At the core of the system is that anyone in a Marra person’s mother’s semi-
moietty has a managerial and judicial role (known as junggayi) over everything belonging
to that person’s own semi-moietty. While semi-moieties and the accompanying system of
‘ownership’ and ‘management’ infiltrate all interactions Marra people have with each
other, the land and everything on the land, aspects of the life of Marra people can also be
described in secular ways.

Since their arrival, a handful of Munanga have gathered information about traditional,
pre-contact lifestyles and practices of people living in coastal areas in and around Marra
country. While some research pertaining to Marra people specifically has been carried
out, there is more extensive information documented for neighbouring groups such as
the Nunggubuyu and Yanyuwa with which Marra people and land share much in terms of
ontology. Stories in Marra, Nunggubuyu, Warndarrang and Yanyuwa documented by
Heath (1980a; 1980b; 1981) and Bradley and Kirton (1992) capture aspects of the pre-
contact life of people sharing the western waters and coastal areas of the Gulf of Carpentaria. These narratives describe aspects such as hunting (of numerous food sources, using various methods), cultural practices (burial, wife bestowal), making and using tools and implements, conflicts between groups and individuals and more.

Marra people, being coastal or ‘saltwater’ people, have traditions of interacting with and utilising marine and mangrove environments. Heath’s description of the “traditional subsistence economy” of Nunggubuyu people (below) can be applied to Marra people as well, given their cultural similarities and the ecological similarities of their territories. Note that Nunggubuyu, like Marra people, also utilised inland areas, including open woodland and freshwater ecosystems (i.e. rivers and billabongs) which are especially important during the annual extended periods without rain:

Important marine sources of meat were dugong and turtles (especially green turtles) and fish of reefs, beaches, and estuaries. Crustaceans and shellfish can also be mentioned. Terrestrial game included five species of kangaroos and wallabies; birds including emus and various wading or diving species; snakes including file snakes (aquatic) and pythons; fish of rivers and lagoons; freshwater mussels and occasional freshwater crustaceans; etc. Eggs, especially of turtles, were relished. ... Corns and seeds of *Nymphaea* lilies were fundamental staples during much of the dry season. Toward the end of the dry season, receding lagoons provided abundant root food *Triglochin prodera* and *Eleocharis dulcis*. ... Many species of trees and some vines of monsoon scrub provided fruits; the broadly distributed tree *Buchanania obovata* (‘green plum’) was also important. Common yams include two *Dioscorea* species and several *Ipomoea* species. Many trees provided medicinal substances or had some other direct or indirect economic significance. Five species of honey bee are distinguished...

(M Heath 1978c: 40–41)

Marra people adopted the use of *muwarda* ‘dugout canoes’, including those with riggings. This technology was acquired from Macassans – either directly or via neighbouring languages groups who had greater interactions with Macassans than Marra people did. Tools and equipment such as *rajarr* ‘harpoons’, *ngardugu* ‘rope’, *dungal* ‘spears’, *ralga* ‘coolamons’, *bijabija* ‘digging sticks’, *yarlgi* ‘string bags’, *wanyin* ‘stone blades’ and *galgal* ‘axes’ were all important to the pre-contact economy of Marra people. Using fire to hunt land game, building fish dams or traps and de-oxygenating water with certain plant species to catch fish were also important practices that were employed for economic purposes.

Before contact, Marra people would have lived mostly in small family groups, probably centred on estates they had religious and familial connections to. Semi-permanent
camping areas supported lifestyles that were necessarily transient to carry out religious obligations (funerals and other ceremonies) in various locations and to allow for shifting living areas as determined by want or by seasons, weather and food availability. Ceremonial life, including the first initiation ceremonies (Mandiwa), major ceremonies like Yabuduruwa and Gunabibi that are owned by certain semi-moieties, and funeral and burial practices with their associated ceremonies, were core parts of social and spiritual life. Such ceremonies "celebrate and restate foundational mythologies that link the present with the origins of the cosmos" (Garde 2011: 404). For major ceremonies, large numbers of people from neighbouring language groups would travel to Marra country and likewise Marra people would travel to the country of others.\textsuperscript{14} This, along with common intermarriage with neighbouring groups fostered a culture of multilingualism. Despite "evidence that virtually everybody in the old days was multilingual" (Joshua 2004: 18), individual linguistic identity that was derived from one's lineage retained importance, reinforced by the phenomenon of languages being tied to tracts of land as much as to people. This ensured the maintenance of individual languages in multilingual settings, as politeness dictates that a person should speak, or at least acknowledge, the language of the land on which a person is situated and that "the language someone spoke was the main way of telling which group they belonged to" (Joshua 2004: 17). Note that in this chapter, I sometimes refer to 'Marra-speaking people' rather than 'Marra people', as not all Marra speakers discussed below claimed a Marra identity as their primary identity. A handful of Marra speakers who feature in this chapter identified more closely with near-neighbours such as Alawa, Warndarrang or Yanyuwa, despite being fully-fluent in Marra.

Oral histories of Marra people who grew up with little or no contact with Munanga provide testimonies of what life may have been like for Marra people before the arrival of Munanga. Elsie Joshua, the mother of John Joshua (quoted above), recounts some of her childhood, which she spent living off the land in a small family group in the Limmen Bight area. The following extract of her story, recorded by her son in Kriol and translated by Cherry Daniels, is consistent with descriptions of pre-contact life given above:

\begin{quote}
We used to stay at Limmen with all the Marra old women and one old man. His name was Diwaj. We used to get mindiwaba 'saltwater mussels'. I always went hunting at Limmen River, hunting without a break, because we used to get these mussels to eat. We didn’t use a line. They killed fish any way with wire spears. We
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} See §2.2.2 below for an account of when a large ceremony was interrupted by intruding overlanders in 1872, resulting in significant numbers of Aboriginal people being shot and killed.
killed dugong with rope from big dilan ‘kurrajong’ trees. They twisted the rope with a big stick. Your grandfather, my daddy, always made harpoon nail for dugong. After we went to Yumun.guni (Beatrice Island), we came back to Wurrumarla (Lake Mary). We ate turtles, sugarbag (wild honey), jalma (bitter yam), jiwurru (wild cassava), fish, dugong and mulalu (a kind of nut that is dug out in swamps). ... all the bush tucker you can think of. We used to cook the food in the fire or we used to put the little animals between the ashes. When my daddy used to kill turtle or dugong we used to roast them in earth ovens.

We stayed one month at Milinjan and then we went to Nganiyan.girri. You can see my ‘country’ Manuga ‘hill’ from Nganiyan.girri. We climbed on top of Nganiyan.girri hill. When the floodwater went down we went back to Limmen. ... When we left one place we used to tell each other which country we would go to next. (Joshua, Joshua and Daniels 2004: 53–54)

Note that in this short extract Elsie Joshua captures aspects of pre-contact lifestyles such as the types of food eaten, how they were procured, living in small family groups and the importance/salience of kinship, moving according to season and living and interacting with country, the salience of placenames and the social importance of place. This type of life that Marra people led on their country for centuries was irreversibly altered upon the arrival of Munanga.

2.1.3 **The First Munanga on Marra Land**

It is well documented in the literature and in oral histories of Aboriginal people in Northern Australia that they were visited by and had substantial interactions with Macassan traders for centuries prior to European invasion (Macknight 1976). Between 200 and 300 loanwords from Macassarese and Malay are found throughout Aboriginal languages of Northern Australia (Walker and Zorc 1981; Evans 1992b). We can assume that these were the first non-Indigenous visitors to Marra land, but the evidence that they spent much time there, if any, is not conclusive. Compared to other coastal language groups, including neighbouring groups like Yanyuwa and Nunggubuyu, there is little evidence of Marra people interacting with south-east Asian visitors. There are no oral history accounts from Marra people about Macassans, whereas such accounts can be found for Nunggubuyu (Heath 1980b: 530–550) and Yanyuwa (Baker 1999: 65–74). Macknight’s detailed volume describing the Macassans’ Northern Australian industries (1976) makes only one small mention of Marra land, positing that “there are also said to be traces of the Macassans on Maria Island” (ibid: 61).

Evans (1992b: 47) uses linguistic evidence to link Macassans to various language groups in Northern Australia. He quantifies the number of Macassan loanwords in Marra and close neighbours as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Loans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marra</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanyuwa</td>
<td>22 (+4 tentative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunggubuyu</td>
<td>28 (+4 tentative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Evans acknowledged that Marra people appear not to have been visited much by Macassans, he does argue that linguistic evidence shows that direct contact between Macassans and Marra people occurred. The argument is based on one Marra word *gandirri* (food, flour, bread), which he says is borrowed from the Macassan *kanre* (food, cooked rice). This is the only Macassan or Malay loanword in Marra listed that is not also found in Yanyuwa and/or Nunggubuyu. It is possible that the majority, if not all, of the small set of Macassan and Malay loans in Marra were borrowed from neighbours like the Yanyuwa and Nunggubuyu who are known to have had meaningful contact with Macassans. Marra shares a high proportion of lexical material with Yanyuwa and Nunggubuyu and so the notion that shared Macassans loans in Marra were borrowed from those languages rather than directly is plausible. This leaves the question open as to whether the Marra actually did have much direct contact with Macassans.16

Matthew Flinders circumnavigated Australia in the early 1800s, charting the Gulf of Carpentaria in the monsoonal wet season of 1802–03. On December 31, 1802, his diary tells of his discovery that *Gurrululinya* (Maria Island) was an island, not a cape as the Dutch had previously mapped it (Flinders 1814). That night, Flinders saw fires on the island and on the following morning he “landed with the botanical gentlemen, to examine the productions and take bearings” (*ibid*: 179). He further notes:

> That men were upon the island was shown by the fires, and it was corroborated by the fresh prints of feet upon the sand; but they eluded our search, and we did not find either canoes or habitations. (Flinders 1814: 179)

Flinders appears to have had no direct or further contact with people on Maria Island who can be assumed to be of Marra heritage.

Ludwig Leichhardt and his exploration party were probably the next Europeans to interact with Marra land and people when they traversed part of Marra country,

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15 Evans gave a figure of 12, but it has been revised to 11 here given that *gulinga* (long rope in sail’s rigging) is listed twice in the list of loans: once as a Malay borrowing and once as a Macassan borrowing.

16 Evans (1992b) also suggests that the comparatively low number of Macassan and Malay loans in Marra may be due to the language being insufficiently documented. Heath’s dictionary (1981) contains around 1800 items and, while this is not a large number, I have used it extensively during Marra documentation and found it to be a thorough (though not complete) record of the language.
including Limmen Bight River, in October 1845 (see Map 2–3). Leichhardt's diary (1847) provides indications of the lives that Marra people were living at the time, prior to any distinguishable contact or influence from Munanga having occurred. Leichhardt's records also represent a symbolic moment in the modern history of Marra people: a ‘first coming’ of Munanga; when Leichhardt “heard the cooees” of Marra people on October 6, 1845, it signals the end of the pre-contact period and the start of 170 years of contact history that has brought far-reaching change for Marra people. As such, his brief notes on what he saw while on Marra country represent unrepeatable moments of Munanga interacting with Marra people unaffected by European contact.

Leichhardt travelled from the Macarthur River area through Marra country to Roper Bar Crossing over the course of two weeks. His diary indicates that the area, including and especially the Limmen Bight River area, was well-populated. On October 6, during the driest, hottest and harshest part of the year, one of the party:

... met a long line of native women returning, with their dillies and baskets full of shellfish... We saw their numerous tracks, and a footpath leading to the river; and heard their cooees round our present camp, which may have interfered with one of their camping places.

Negotiating country south of the Limmen Bight River between the coast and inland ranges, Leichhardt regularly mentions evidence of local residents, again indicating significant numbers of Aboriginal people were living in the area:

October 9: ... we followed a foot-path of the natives, who seemed very numerous.

October 11: ... leaving the salt-water plains ... crossed several well-beaten foot-paths, and a sort of playground on which the natives seemed to have danced and crawled about, as it bore the impression of both hands and feet.

Leichhardt’s party had to negotiate past the river systems that converge around Limmen Bight River in order to continue travelling north-west towards Port Essington in the Top End. Leichhardt’s party detoured to the south, loosely following the upstream path of Limmen Bight River. During these travels, they:

... found a crossing at a fishing place of the natives, in an old camping place near this fishery, I saw a long tunnel-shaped fish trap, made of the flexible stem of Flagellaria\(^\text{17}\). (October 12)

\(^{17}\) In Marra: *rilgarra* (Flagellaria indica)
On October 13, Leichhardt saw and named Barrguwirriji as the "Four Archers" and crossed the Limmen Bight River and headed north-west towards the Roper River and out of Marra country (as shown on Map 2–3).\textsuperscript{18} Leichhardt’s diary supports the idea that the area around Limmen Bight River was a nexus, sustaining the Marra way of life for many people. This area remained crucial to the maintenance of Marra language and traditional lifestyles and Marra people continued to live and subsist in the area permanently until at least the 1940s. Most or all of the remaining fluent speakers involved in the present study grew up there, resided there or spent considerable amounts of time there. The significance of the Limmen Bight area is discussed again in sections below that relate to other post-contact periods in recent Marra history.

\textsuperscript{18}Note that nearer to the Roper, Leichhardt began observing signs of Munanga influence. The first mention in the diary was on October 18 when members of his party “observed a wooden post, cut with an iron tomahawk... which seemed to be the work either of white men or Malays”. Leichhardt made no such mentions of evidence of Munanga while on Marra country, indicating that they were perhaps sufficiently isolated to have not encountered Munanga prior to 1845.
2.2 1845–1900: First Contact, Pastoralism and Violence

While Leichhardt's most violent act while on Marra land was arguably only to give new names to Marra sites and usurp their original names, it was not long before subsequent Munanga visiting Marra land began to commit more serious acts. In 1865, the HMS Schooner Beatrice surveyed Limmen Bight with crew members also spending time ashore on Marra country. A crew member's diary reveals that on a three-day trip ashore, they 'souvenired' a skull, taking it from a decomposing body that was clearly still in the process of mortuary rituals:

... we went for a stroll and found the body of a native in a tree wrapped in paper bark and secured with cord of their own manufacture, the legs being bent back to the body it was only half the proper length. ... the skull ... was taken aboard as a trophy for the doctor. (Webling 1995: 48)

Marra waters were explored by the Beatrice in 1865 and Francis Cadell in 1867 and like Leichhardt, both parties found clear evidence of the activities of Marra people. While in Limmen Bight, the Commander of the Beatrice, Frederick Howard, felt "sure we were generally watched" (Howard 1865 in Olney 2002: 64). Webling's diary (the shipmate who took the skull) makes near-daily references to "fresh tracks of natives", "plenty of fires visible", freshly burned grass and "a canoe ... with one native in her" (Webling 1995: 46–48) during his short time in Marra territories. Similarly, in August 1867 a member of Francis Cadell’s expedition reported that:

... in Limmen Bight, we were surprised to see a canoe ahead of us, about one and a half miles from shore, with two natives in it. They had a fine turtle on board... (Olney 2002: 64)

The above also further demonstrates that Marra people were numerous and living industrious lives suggesting a larger population than the 150 proposed by Heath (as mentioned in §2.1.1).

2.2.1 The Overland Telegraph

Limited Munanga activity on and near Marra country expanded substantially when the Overland Telegraph was constructed between Adelaide and Darwin (see Map 2–3),

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{19} The act of giving European names to Aboriginal places carries a significance that is susceptible to being overlooked. As Edmonds argues, "Colonial expeditions ... were determined efforts at inscription. By putting regions on a map ... explorers laid the first, and deepest, foundations for colonial power." (Edmonds 2007a: 65)}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{20} This ship gave its name to Beatrice Island, usurping the original Marra name Yumun.guni.}}}\]
forging a communication channel from southern Australia to the rest of the world via the Top End of the Northern Territory. In 1871, during construction phase, boat landings near Roper Bar became a supply station and a temporary camp of up to 300 Munanga. For a short time it was “the largest centre of European population in the Northern Territory” (Harris 1986: 186) and the Roper River saw several ships regularly traverse it to deliver supplies. This activity only skirted Marra country but it can be assumed that Marra people interacted with Munanga working on the Overland Telegraph. Supply ships visited Maria Island on several occasions and came across Marra people or evidence of them (Olney 2002). The presence of Munanga on the Roper River in this period established a culture of fear and mistrust between Munanga and Aboriginal people (Harris 1986: 188). While there are no reports of violent death occurring in the immediate area at this time, Munanga frequently used firearms to “drive Aboriginal people off” and theft, in at least one incident, led a party of Munanga to temporarily capture an Aboriginal elder who then had “a bullock chain firmly rivetted around his neck. ... He was then chained to a tree that the natives on the other side could see him” (Patterson 29 May 1872 in Harris 1986: 187). Despite the Overland Telegraph depot having possibly only peripheral impact on Marra people and being abandoned in 1874, it nevertheless established a pattern of black-white relations in the area and:

... heralded the end of the era in which the Aboriginal people of the region lived autonomously on their own lands and the beginning of the era in which life, for those who were allowed to live, was to become progressively more dominated by Europeans. (Harris 1986: 185–186)

2.2.2 “Terrible days we used to had” : guerilla warfare and the pastoral frontier

The completion of the Overland Telegraph in 1872 facilitated and made viable further European developments. Gold mining and a budding pastoral industry increased in scope and size. It was then that Leichhardt’s path through Gulf country and Marra country (d)evolved into the “Coast Track”, the only route used by overlanders, drovers and their cattle as well as gold prospecting hopefuls who made their way – ultimately, in their thousands – from Queensland to the Gulf Country and Top End.

In 1872, Dillon Cox and D’Arcy Uhr followed Leichhardt’s route, droving cattle that were “widely believed to be the first stock to enter the Territory from the east, and were the first cattle to arrive in the Top End by land” (Roberts 2005: 13). Cox and Uhr’s journey represents the point where previous instances of injustice and haphazard violence against Aboriginal people at the hands of Munanga in and near Marra country tipped
over into a period of widespread violence, mass killings and a state of lawlessness and guerrilla warfare. From an account by James Barry, one of the men in Cox and Uhr’s party, historian Tony Roberts details events that unfolded when Cox, Uhr and their party were droving their stock through Marra country:

The party travelled ... to the crossing used by Leichhardt, a rocky bar close to the Four Archers, which became known as Cox’s Crossing. This river was said to mark the boundary between the friendly tribe [Wilangarra] and its neighbours, possibly the Marra people. It was a short journey from there north-west to the Wickham River (now the Cox) where the party made camp. ... The next day was Sunday, a rest day, so the party relaxed. Early in the afternoon the horses came galloping towards the camp in a cloud of dust: ‘... a mob of about 130 blacks were perceived running behind the horses and throwing spears at them as hard as they could’. [D’Arcy] Uhr ordered Ah Choo to guard the camp while he and the other five men prepared for battle in their usual military style, forming a hollow square. (Roberts 2005: 20)

Roberts then quotes from Barry’s account, published in the Brisbane Courier in 1874, describing how well-armed the trespassing group was when confronted:

Their firearms consisted, besides revolvers, of a splendid Martigny [sic] rifle, capable of making good practice up to 1,000 yards and five Westley Richards, carrying accurately up to 400 yards. ... over seventy of the sable warriors persisted in advancing, flourishing their spears as they came. These were now seen to be in regular war costume, being beautifully painted in a martial fashion, and with feathers and down of all kinds of birds tufted on their breasts and all over their bodies. (Roberts 2005: 20–21)

The men they encountered were not in “war costume” but rather “a crowd of men gathered for a major ceremony” (Roberts 2005: 21). A slaughter ensued, unwittingly instigated by the men painted up for ceremony who almost certainly had no experience of European weaponry:

... ‘they began the conflict by discharging a flight of spears at him [Uhr], which he had great difficulty in evading’. Uhr replied with the deadly Martini-Henry and the battle was on. Despite the heavy losses, the Aboriginals were said to have kept advancing, the warriors being supplied with armfuls of spears by an unpainted contingent at the rear. Cox’s men ‘kept up a continuous rattle of rifle

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21 This refers to Uhr’s weapon, a Martini-Henry rifle, which Roberts points out was an extremely powerful weapon that “could kill an elephant. The enormous bullets caused horrific injuries to those not killed outright. When fired into a crowd, a single bullet could pass through one person and then kill or maim others. The Martini-Henry was capable of killing a person at more than a kilometre” (Roberts 2009: 6).
shots', as they picked off the opposing side one by one with their long-range rifles. (Roberts 2005: 21)

Roberts again quotes from the 1874 Brisbane Courier report:

... yet for nearly a full half-hour [the Aboriginals] held their ground in the face of strange weapons, of whose deadliness they received momentarily fearful proofs in the numbers of their comrades who writhed or lay forever motionless among them. (Roberts 2005: 21)

The author continues, describing the havoc that Uhr and company would have wrought:

Six men firing large-calibre rifles deliberately and continuously for even, say, ten minutes at a crowd of 130 would have caused a great many deaths and terrible injuries to people with no experience of firearms. (Roberts 2005: 22)

This was the first known slaughter on Marra country at the hands of Munanga, just one of many massacres of Aboriginal people that occurred in the mid–late 1800s on the pastoral frontier (Bottoms 2013; Roberts 2005). Not all deaths were attributable to interracial territorial violence however; in 1874, a struggling overland droving party splintered and two of its members became lost. One of the men, William Nation, ultimately perished 35km north-east of Limmen Bight crossing, his body found a week later by a search party. Later that year (September 1874) another struggling party arrived at the Limmen Bight River who were physically weak and socially fractured. The group’s cook abandoned the group and set out on foot, never to be seen again, but his “tracks were found, shadowed by those of an Aboriginal” (Roberts 2005: 36).

Traffic along the Coast Track increased greatly as more pastoral leases saw increased numbers of overlanders droving cattle through Marra country. Violence and atrocities increased and Marra people tried to defend their territory and livelihoods. In 1878, a Munanga member of a droving team, William Travers, was decapitated while alone at the drover’s temporary camp near the Limmen Bight River (Harris 1986: 197). The reminiscences penned by the party leader’s son are typically scant on details of the reprisal(s) that followed which almost certainly resulted in multiple deaths of local Aboriginal people:

... a punitive expedition was organized against Travers’s murderers who met with just retribution. (Buchanan 1984: 55)

22“A nearby tributary of the Limmen Bight River was ... named after him but is now erroneously called the Nathan River”. (Roberts 2005: 33)
Instances of violence against Aboriginal people were insufﬁciently documented by Munanga, if at all. When they were they were shrouded by euphemisms such as “a terror’, ‘teach them a lesson’, ‘punish them’ and ‘disperse them’ [which] made the white population feel more comfortable about frontier practices” (Roberts 2005: 26).

Two more Munanga were killed by Aboriginal people on or near Marra country while the Coast Track was in heavy use by drovers passing through to the Top End. In 1878, John Barry was found “with two spear wounds through his neck and his skull smashed” (Roberts 2005: 52) near the Limmen Bight River. Three years later at Rosie Creek, south of Limmen Bight River, Patrick McNamara was murdered in similar circumstances, speared in the head while left alone.

Inspector Paul Foelsche, who was in charge of the Top End police force, responded to McNamara’s murder by proposing that a party of police and volunteers be sent to the Limmen Bight district to shoot a number of the local tribe who, he said, were responsible for all the murders of whites travelling overland from Queensland. Although he used expressions such as ‘punish the guilty tribe’ and ‘inflict severe chastisement’, his intentions were clear enough to anyone familiar with the euphemistic language of the frontier. He also wanted the party to be given immunity from prosecution. The government certainly knew what he meant, and vetoed his extraordinary proposal. (Roberts 2005: 53)

This was a typical response to violent acts carried out by Marra and other Aboriginal people who aggressively resisted the invasion of their lands by Munanga. As Harris notes, “European reprisal ... was fierce, relentless and, more often than not, greatly out of proportion to the extent of the crimes committed against them” (Harris 1986: 195). Some Aboriginal murders were not even motivated by retaliation or vengeance. The nostalgic memoir of Linklater and Tapp, states plainly that, “[t]here is no doubt that during the cattle migration and the gold rush to the Kimberleys, the whites shot down the blacks like crows all along the route” (Linklater and Tapp 1968: 74). When traffic on the Coast Track was at its peak, “the level of violence between black and white reached a state of virtual warfare along parts of the track, especially... in Marra territory near the Limmen Bight and Wickham [Cox] rivers” (Roberts 2005: 64).

By 1885, pastoral leases had been taken up across the entire Gulf Region and stations were stocked. This meant that the traffic on the worn Coast Track subsided as did the violence that accompanied it. The leasing of land by the South Australian government, however, meant that Aboriginal people had been officially dispossessed of their land. The pastoral leases that were handed out included the Valley of Springs, which was established as a station around 1884 (shown on Map 2–3). At over 12,000km², the lease
covered virtually all of Marra country. So, while violence may have subsided, the Marra people who survived had, according to European law, become trespassers on their own land.

2.2.3 Valley of Springs: the Pastoral Leasing of Marra Land

In 1884 or sometime just before, the South Australian government leased virtually the entire territory of the Marra people to John Costello for the purposes of establishing a pastoral station, Valley of Springs. At the time, despite the violence of preceding years, Marra country was still home to an unknown number of people living lives little changed from previous generations. A healthy population of Marra people is indicated by references in Costello’s memoir (Costello 1930) to “tracks of natives in great numbers” (127), “distant parties … standing in the tidal waters spearing fish” (145) and, when a cargo ship sailed into the Limmen Bight River in 1885,

... the natives gathered on the river banks, shouting, gesticulating and making friendly signs of welcome, some even going out in their bark canoes, gave practical assistance by signals and directions as to the best and deepest channels in which to navigate the vessel. (Costello 1930: 134)

Despite the earlier violence and disruption caused by traffic on the Coast Track, it can be easily suggested that at least a hundred – perhaps several hundred– people were living on Marra country when Valley of Springs was established. Yet the ideology of Munanga at the time was that “practically the whole of the territory was in an unoccupied position” (Costello 1930: 90) and this ideology survived throughout much of the following century. The paradox of Costello finding that “signs of Aboriginals were plentiful” (Costello 1930: 141) on supposedly unoccupied land seems to have gone unnoticed.

Costello’s son and biographer discusses a challenging first wet season of 1884–1885 in which Marra people made a heavy impact on stock numbers, killing significant numbers for their own consumption. Recounting an instance when Costello tracked a stolen bullock, his son goes on to describes the covert, skillful methods with a sense of admiration of Marra people:

There would be seen what a splendid feast and corroboree had taken place. The well picked bones of the beast, sometimes of two cattle, showed what a number of blacks were at the carnival. But not an aboriginal to be seen. ... they had all left, betaken themselves to the safe retreat of the ranges. They seemed to know, by some strange intuition, when the ground would be just in the condition to allow a white man to venture out and patrol the grazing areas of his stock. But to guard against any likely surprise, the position for the banquet and corroboree was always well and strategically selected ... All during the heavy wet season that was
the ever-recurring experience, cattle killed and eaten, but never a blackfellow to be seen. Only once in these numerous patrols were the natives actually caught red-handed ... But the blacks knew every inch in their vantage ground of retreat, and, in a few seconds, not a native could be seen. They left behind them the remains of the banquet, a quantity of beautifully cooked meat as clean, in appearance, as if it had come out of a camp-oven. (Costello 1930: 127–129)

Costello set up the station on the Limmen Bight River, but Marra people left the Costellos – John, his wife and their seven children – in relative peace. "Only a few horses were speared and no attempts were made on the homestead" (Costello 1930: 131). Yet violence still occurred, most notably when a fencer named Bird who was working for the station was killed, although Roberts points out the uncertainty in ascertaining what may have actually happened (Roberts 2005: 166–167). Despite relative peace, Valley of Springs no doubt restricted the movements of Marra people who, in the dry season, "retreated to the fastness of the ranges, or the scrubs and marshes of the coast" (Costello 1930: 131). It appears as though, for the most part, they deliberately avoided significant contact with Munanga while Valley of Springs existed. It was indeed a short-lived venture. With tough conditions and virtually no market to sell stock to, the Costellos left the station in 1893 and the last cattle were moved out in 1896 (Roberts 2005: 167), allowing the Marra people to regain control of their land.

2.2.4 GENERAL NOTES ON THE PASTORAL FRONTIER

The above evidence of Marra people’s tragic experiences with the pastoral frontier is a story with similar iterations for other language groups across the Gulf country and indeed across the Northern Territory. In some ways Marra people appear not to have suffered as much as others, through being able to find some refuge and isolation in hill country, in areas bounded by ranges and in thick mangroves and wetland areas along the coast.

Much more could be said about the pastoral expansion, colonisation and accompanying violence that occurred in the NT. Historians have pieced together compelling evidence and tales that point to catastrophic injustices that many Aboriginal people suffered. Such scholars include Tony Roberts who focused on the Gulf Region (2005), John Harris (1986), Francesca Merlan who examined this history from the perspective of Mangarrayi people (1978) and Timothy Bottoms who describes high levels of violence associated

23 Twelve years after leaving, John Costello and a son returned to the area finding few remnants of their station and that "The only things which remained unchanged were the everlasting ranges" (Costello 1930: 228).
with the Queensland frontier (2013). It is a dark history that is recorded, albeit often euphemistically or in scant details, at every level: in the oral histories of Aboriginal people, in the memoirs and biographies of Munanga who were there, in police reports, government reports and official letters and in newspapers. The ideology that Aboriginal people everywhere, including the Marra, could be killed, captured, indentured, stripped of land, humiliated, denigrated – even raped and tortured – seems to have been the ethos at the time. So acceptable was it that it was possible for the *Northern Territory Times* to publish statements such as:

> We must go into actual warfare with them and fight them on their own principles. Shoot those you cannot get at; and hang those that you do catch on the nearest tree as an example to the rest; and let not the authorities be too curious and ask too many questions of those who may be sent to perform the service. (*Northern Territory Times*, 23 October 1875)

Roberts summarises how Aboriginal people might have experienced pastoral expansion in the Gulf Region:

> Watching in stunned disbelief were the Aboriginal peoples who had enjoyed quiet ownership of this land for thousands of years. Precious lagoons providing food and clean water were fouled by cattle; permanent living areas, fish traps and wildlife habitats were damaged or destroyed; and beasts bogg and died in the shrinking waterholes of the dry season, turning them into slimy swamps. The visitors were attacked, along with their horses and cattle, but spears, clubs and boomerangs were no match for the latest rifles, revolvers and shotguns. The enormous herds soon began spilling out from the stock route and occupying the countryside, the entire district having been leased to pastoralists as if it were vacant land. Sites of profound significance were desecrated by the strangers and their livestock, either inadvertently or deliberately. Now dispossessed, the original owners of the land were forced to live secretly, back in the hills and gullies. Resistance continued but was met with terrible reprisals. People were shot for the spearing of a single cow, and women and children were sometimes among the victims. (Roberts 2005: 1–2)

### 2.2.5 Language Situation During This Period

In a period where the very lives of many Marra and Marra-speaking people were at risk, linguistic concerns seem somewhat trivial. Nevertheless, we can still speculate on the language situation of Marra people and the overall health of their language during this era. Throughout the first part of this period, it can be assumed that Marra people’s contact with English was limited. Harris argues that up to 1880, despite increasing European presence, “many [Europeans]... had no interest in communicating with the local Aboriginal people” (Harris 1986: 199). The major impact on the health of Marra as a
language would not have been due to language contact but rather due to the violence that was occurring in the 1870s and beyond. Deaths at the hands of Munanga would have had a significant effect on the number of Marra speakers. Importantly, the regime of violence would have also caused Marra people to alter their movements and lifestyle considerably. Those who remained on their land living a traditional lifestyle would have taken refuge from violence in less accessible places and probably had fewer interactions with other groups. High levels of multilingualism could have been reduced as terrorised or exiled Marra people would have been interacting less with neighbours speaking other languages. Birth rates would have likely dropped as well, as happens when any population comes under such stress. Although Marra people who survived and remained on country would have maintained their language, a declining population and the impacted lives of survivors would possibly have begun to jeopardise the status of Marra as a healthy language.

Other sections of the Marra population would have had greater and prolonged contact with Munanga, especially those in contact with the town of Borroloola (Burrulula, in local orthographies) which was gazetted in 1885. Borroloola lies on Yanyuwa country, south-east from Marra lands and, although it is and presumably always has been socially and politically dominated by Yanyuwa people (from an Aboriginal perspective), Borroloola was likely to have been regularly visited by some or many Marra people in its early stages of development.

Marra people in Borroloola and those in regular contact with Munanga on pastoral stations (for example) would have had significant exposure to this Northern Territory Pidgin English, the precursor to Kriol. As Harris shows, “by the turn of the century ... there was a widely understood Pidgin English throughout the region” (1986: 214). Throughout this period, Pidgin English would have increasingly become a part of the linguistic ecology of an increasing number of Marra people, but it would have remained an auxiliary language for most or all who knew it and probably remained virtually unknown to those Marra people still subsisting on country with little or no contact with Munanga.

2.2.6 Marra People of this Period and Their Lives

There is little documentation of the lives of individual Marra people or Marra-speaking people from this period. In John Costello’s memoir, only one Aboriginal person who worked at Valley of Springs station is mentioned by name and discussed in any detail. A man named ‘Dick’ by Costello, who presumably was a Marra man and a Marra speaker,
mustered and travelled with Costello for some months and developed “sufficient knowledge of English to make himself understood” (Costello 1930: 135). While surveying the large property, Dick abandoned Costello and returned to live with his own people.

Barnabas Roberts24 was an Alawa man born around 1893 and a resident of the Roper River Mission in its early years. He provides an oral history account of the period in which violence was prevalent, which he would have spent in inland areas east of Marra country which was leased for the Hodgson Downs pastoral station:

> White people hunt us out from there, shootim people like kangaroo, like bird. Oh terrible days we used to had: We never walk around much ‘mongst the plain country our groun’. We used to up la hill alla time to save our life. Our old people you know: Used to take us away from plain or river or billabong. Only night time they used to run down to get the lily (lily seed). Alla young men you know: Can’t go daytime, frighten for white people. Too many murderers went about killing native. (Roberts 1986: 66)

Isaac Joshua provided Jeffrey Heath with another account of violence that took place at Hodgson Downs station during this period. The story is told in Warndarrang, but Isaac was also a Marra speaker. (Isaac’s brother’s daughter is Betty Roberts who was a key contributor to the present study.) An excerpt from the story, passed down to Isaac by his father who was either there or close to the events, follows:

> Wulanyibanga wulu-nu wulu-niya bing-galnguganyi bing-galnguganyi wunu daburr-daburr-angubura bing-galnguganyi, wulanyibanga wulu-nu wulu-ninyi, ja-jaj-galngujanga, yo, Na-gayi na-munanga-nyu, wu-nayanga wunu gal-arraja, bards na-gayi wu-nayanga na-munanga-nyu gal-arraja,

They wiped out the group that stayed there, where the battle began. The group that had run off that way were being chased. The Aboriginals speared the White man going this way, then another.


Both sides were losing men now. The White men put the wood which the Aboriginals had cut down in a heap and set it on fire. They burned the bodies of some of the dead Aboriginals. The bodies were on fire there.

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24 Barnabas is likely to have spoken Marra as well as his own language, Alawa. Barnabas’ son Stanley did some Marra vocabulary elicitation with Margaret Sharpe in Ngukurr in 1966.
Warri-alinga, manyi dirra-arraba, nanu Long Peter, manyibanga, na-ngayana daburr-arraba, wiya.

The White men went back. They shot Long Peter, the one they had tied up before, in turn. That's all. (Joshua 1986: 179–181)

In being able to maintain lifestyles that reflected those of previous generations, many Marra people were undoubtedly better off than their inland ‘freshwater’ neighbours, helped by being able to live off mangrove and coastal environments that were sufficiently inaccessible and removed from pastoralism. Kirton, referring to the Marra people’s saltwater neighbours, the Yanyuwa, mentions that "the Yanyuwa’s island and coastal territory was not attractive to settlers and that there was consequently less conflict for them" (Kirton 1988: 18). This situation appears to also apply to at least some Marra people.

2.3 1900–1940: THE END OF VIOLENCE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROPER RIVER MISSION

2.3.1 THE END OF PASTORAL INDUSTRY VIOLENCE

The widespread violence that accompanied the expansion of the pastoral industry into Marra country and beyond had a final powerful conclusion after the turn of the century. Large areas of land to the immediate north and west of Marra territories were leased to the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company. Attempting to develop a massive pastoral empire, in 1903 they “gained government approval to use the entire eastern half of Arnhem Land” (Roberts 2005: 153) and also acquired smaller ailing or failed stations: Elsey, Hodgson Downs and Wollogorang. An enormous single station, Arafura, was formed but was another short-lived venture; the operating company ceased operations in 1908. Their impact, however, was profound, as Merlan describes:

‘Eastern and African’ engaged in what was apparently the most systematic extermination of Aborigines ever carried out on the Roper and in the company’s Arnhem Land holdings. (Merlan 1978: 87)

Merlan quotes a CSIRO report by Bauer who had interviewed a man named George Conway in 1957 who, in 1905 or 1906, “had been hired to lead a hunting expedition into Arnhem Land … and that his party had killed dozens of Aborigines” (Merlan 1978: 87). Bauer wrote that:

This was probably one of the few authenticated instances in which the aborigines were systematically hunted. For a time the company employed 2 gangs of 10 to
14 blacks headed by a white man or half caste to hunt and shoot the wild blacks on sight. (Bauer 1964: 157 in Merlan 1978: 87)

Harris argues “that there is a direct relationship between language loss ... and the proportion of the speakers massacred” (Harris 1986: 232). Fortunately for the Marra, their lands were not part of Arafura and the hunting parties focused more on areas adjacent to Marra country (although it is likely that some Marra people and Marra-speaking people were in the affected areas). A significant impact of the organised hunting gangs on Marra people is that they galvanised efforts to develop a mission in the region. When the Roper River Mission was established in 1908 it ended the period of pastoral expansion “in which relations between the intruders and indigines [were] conditioned by basic conflict over living space and the use of resources. [The] phase ... in which independent Aboriginal society on the Roper is destroyed” (Bern 1974: 69). Despite the mission era bringing a new and less violent period of change, the undermining of Aboriginal autonomy remained constant, as described by Edmonds:

... for the Aboriginal people of the area, the right to occupy Land (which they already understood as their own) was granted by a piece of paper, to a religious organisation who sought to save them from being hunted and murdered by pastoralists who had also been granted rights to occupy Land by the same government but via other pieces of paper. (Edmonds 2007a: 32)

And so began a new phase of irreversible changes to the lives of Marra people beginning with the Roper River Mission.

2.3.2 Establishing the Roper River Mission

The Roper River Mission was established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1908, partly in response to the violence occurring in the region, especially that brought about by gangs employed by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company. The earliest missionaries at the Roper River Mission heard testimonies of the violence and atrocities that Munanga had been inflicting upon Aboriginal people in the Roper River region. One of the first missionaries, as well as relaying stories of violence preceding the mission, also indicated that it continued after the mission started. In 1918, Reverend Reginald Joynt wrote:

In years gone by the natives have been shot down like game, and hundreds killed in a spirit of revenge. I have met men that boast of shooting the poor unprotected black 'just for fun'. These deeds of shame happened in the early days, but even in the last ten years some deeds have been perpetrated that make a man that has any feeling utterly disgusted. (Joynt 1918)
There are differing emphases that can be placed on the motives of those who established the Roper River Mission. Some, especially those with links to Christian institutions, emphasise that the mission provided safe living conditions for terrorised Aboriginal people. Others emphasise the Christianising and civilising agendas of missionaries (Edmonds 2007b), and do not focus on the mission being a "sanctuary": a perspective supported by the fact that the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company was ailing by the time the mission started and indeed by 1909 the company had been liquidated. Bern goes as far to suggest that the first missionaries “appear to have been unaware of the circumstances preceding their arrival” (1974: 80). A further suggestion made is that “the rapid acceleration in ‘half caste’ children in the Roper region was a primary motive of the CMS” in establishing the Roper River Mission” (Edmonds 2007a: 68). These differing views also influence how the subsequent loss of traditional languages is perceived: whether “the rise of Kriol was the price of the Roper River people’s safety” (Harris 1986: 319) or whether protection from violence was only part of the missionaries’ motivations and that their primary efforts to ‘Christianise’ and ‘civilise’ quite actively contributed to the decline of the region’s Aboriginal languages.

It is clear that many Marra people, like others in the region, had been traumatised by decades of violence and dispossession at the time of the mission’s establishment. It is not quite clear just how Marra people and others in the region came to know about the mission and how they rationalised moving to the mission (or at least deciding to become aligned with the mission). Barnabas Roberts, who was a young man at the time the mission was established, provides a rather matter-of-fact account of the move:

> Our old people brought us. When the missionary came an’ they start the mission down here. All we out there, out in the bush. Our old people and some of our relations. We bin out there and some people came from Roper, police station, walked over, came over there and told us: Missionary down there only. You want to bring all this children, go down la school. They used to call missionary, they didn’t know much about missionary, they used to call the school teacher, gulmaja. (Roberts 1986: 66)

Although scant on detail, Roberts does hint at an assumption made by his elders who equated the mission with education. Education was also a reason why Freda Roberts and her siblings were brought to the mission in the 1940s (see §2.4.4) and is given as the reason in an early missionary’s example of how “a fine boy” came to be at the mission (Joynt 1918). Dinah Garadji, a pre-World War II mission resident, recalled her parents were school age and living in the bush when the missionaries arrived:
Pilot Bob and some others went down and told people, "The school masters are here and they want children". (Garadji 2004: 11)

This suggests that the civilising and Christianising agendas of the early missionaries were not anticipated by Aboriginal people who chose to attend or reside in the mission and that general education appears to be why many Aboriginal people were attracted to it following its establishment. For others, the violence that had been occurring in the region at that time was certainly a factor. Referring specifically to Alawa people (based on Philip Roberts' tales in I, the Aboriginal (Lockwood 1963)), because of violence and terror, "it was not difficult for the missionaries and police to persuade many of the remaining Alawa to move to the safety of the new Mission" (Roberts 2005: 159). Again, it is worth considering that some scholars, particularly those from non-secular backgrounds, may overstate that the Mission provided a haven from violence and that this is what attracted Aboriginal people to it. Alternative views consider that violence at the hands of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company would have ceased by the time the mission started and consider the evidence that at least some Aboriginal people attended the mission for reasons of obtaining Western education rather than for protection from violence.

While the motivations behind the beginnings of the mission and what motivated Aboriginal people to go there may be open to debate, there is one aspect which has certainly been over-emphasised: the degree to which Marra people were attracted to it upon its establishment. Harris argues that "in 1909, over two hundred people had gathered at the mission. They were the remnants of Mara, Wardarang [sic], Ngalakan and Ngandi tribes ... " (1986: 235). It is clear that in 1909 an unknown but not insignificant number of Marra people continued to live on country. Donald Thomson met Marra people among the 80–90 gathered at the Roper River mouth for Ceremony in the 1930s (Thomson and Peterson 2003) and oral evidence of Marra people discussed below indicates that some Marra people remained in the Limmen Bight River area and continued to have children there until the 1940s. As such, it is incorrect to claim that Marra people who were at the mission in 1909 were the ‘remnants’ of the group.

2.3.3 **Civilising and Christianising and Discourses of the ‘Dying Race’**

Regardless of differing views on the Church’s motivations and the reasons that attracted Aboriginal people to the mission, it is not contested that the mission had a clear objective of ‘civilising’ and Christianising. The Christianising agenda was explicitly outlined in the instructions to the first missionaries:
We preface these instructions with a comprehensive promise from the word of God. We do this in order that all men may know the real purpose of your Mission. You are being set apart for the special work of proclaiming the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Aborigines of Northern Australia and more particularly to those living on the vicinity of the Roper River. You are the Ambassadors of Christ. We send you forth as his Representatives. Teach Christ; preach Christ; live Christ; glorify Christ; This is our primary instruction to you. (Church Missionary Association 1908)

In this era, the Christianising agenda was inextricably bound to an agenda of civilising:

CMS and the majority of its Missionaries in Australia were accustomed to believing that there was something particularly Christian about changing people’s lifestyle from being nomadic hunters and gatherers to being settled farmers. (Edmonds 2007a:39)

This is confirmed by John Harris, the son of a missionary who worked in the region in the 1940s:

European missionaries have always had the tendency to link the Christian faith with the European way of life – what was, until quite recently, generally called ‘civilisation’. This meant having European manners, living in a European way and working at European activities. (Harris 1998: 204)

Bern outlines how mission policies controlled and regulated the lives of Aboriginal people:

On Roper Mission this policy was pursued by controlling the greatest possible part of the inmates’ lives. Children were separated from their parents, placed in sex-segregated, missionary supervised dormitories, and educated in English by missionary teachers. Infant betrothal, polygyny and ritual were discouraged, and acceptance into the congregation [was] dependent on abandonment of these practices. (Bern 1974: 86–87)

A 1912–13 report by Reverend J. R. B. Love confirms the positive approval that separating parents from children received and the sought-after ‘civilising’ role this played:

An excellent plan is that adopted by the Anglican missionaries on the Roper River, of encouraging the blacks to leave their children at the mission station, where they shall be cared for and taught, the parents being free to visit the children, and even, if they so wish, to take them away into the bush. Such children usually soon come back from their bush holiday gradually growing less and less anxious for a “walkabout”. (Love 1915: 23)

The mission’s raison d’être and approach meant that the church failed to adequately value Aboriginal people’s cultures, land, languages and heritage and see them as equal:
It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means so inferior as to be unable to rise above the level of a working animal. (Love 1915: 29, italics added)

Yet there are also examples of compassion from missionaries, acknowledging the role they played in enacting cultural change and that this entailed loss:

It is sad to think that, wherever the white man goes, the black man loses his privileges, and works for the white man, thus losing his cunning, which means he is not so at home in the bush as heretofore. (Joynt 1918)

But quotes like that given above also carry a connotation of inevitability, representative of the ethos at the time that Aboriginal people were a ‘dying race’ and that the compassion and care that missionaries brought was an act of ‘smoothing the dying pillow’. The establishment of the Roper River Mission and the missionaries’ civilising and Christianising approaches also brought circumstances that caused the use of Marra and other traditional languages in the mission to decline and fostered the development of a creole, as discussed in §2.3.5.

In physical terms, the Roper River Mission during this period was “little more than basic shelters” (Edmonds 2007b: 196). Edmonds goes on to provide a description of the Mission in its first decades:

As the Mission station developed, the mission area was distinguished by a boundary fence surrounding about seven buildings that accommodated the missionaries, the school, church, workshop, ablutions blocks, a boy’s dormitory and a girl’s dormitory. In the early years … parents were not permitted to stay inside the mission boundary. …

Outside the Roper River mission were the huts of the Aboriginal people who worked on the mission, and beyond those, on the banks of the river, was the ‘camp’ where the visiting ‘bush’ Aboriginal people stayed. In most missions there was an agreed boundary of some kind, distinguishing the ‘camp people’ or the ‘bush blacks’, sometimes referred to simply as ‘myalls’, as distinct from ‘mission people’, undoubtedly as part of the ‘civilising’ goal. As one of the Roper missionaries recalled, one of the more severe punishments for the girls in the Roper dormitory was to be treated like a ‘camp person’. (Edmonds 2007b: 196)

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, the mission was struggling, including accusations of sexual abuse at the hands of at least one missionary, Keith Langford-Smith (Harris 1998: 226–228).25 This, along with general negligence, led to a government inquiry in 1933 that

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25 In 1932 Alawa man Caleb Minimiya (brother of Barnabas Roberts who is quoted in §2.2.6) made serious allegations against Langford Smith in a police statement leading to further enquiries. Allegations included that a ‘young … resident of the girls’ dormitory … was nightly brought to
recommended “that the government withdraw its subsidy to the Roper River Mission and that the mission be closed” on the grounds of “serious health problems and mal-administration” (Harris 1998: 228). However, the government decision to close the mission was deferred and ultimately abandoned in the late 1930s.

Views on the Roper River Mission and missions in general were highly variable at the time and this remains true today. It is not difficult to fault the approach of early missionaries and find critics. The Northern Territory’s Chief Protector of Aborigines in the early 1930s, Dr. Cecil Cook called it an “institution which appears to achieve so little good at the expense of so much harm” (in Harris 1998: 228). Other, more tempered views balance positive and negative aspects, like that given by Cole:

“The missionaries had their faults with attitudes of racial superiority and paternalism. They believed that the only future for Aborigines lay in enticing them away from their nomadic form of life and settling them in communities reflecting white cultural values. ... They and the mission societies supporting them were greatly influenced by Government attitudes of segregation and ultimate assimilation. Yet despite their shortcomings, they were men and women who acted on their compassion, at a time when almost all other white people were unconcerned. ... they had a profound influence in the overall welfare of Aboriginal people, especially those living in the more remote places. (Cole 1988: 182)

2.3.4 Away from the Mission – Maintaining Language and Traditional Practices

Despite the impact of the newly created Roper River Mission, it did not immediately affect all Marra people. Edmonds’ quote above mentions that in the vicinity of the mission there were ‘bush’ people, presumably living lives that were not sedentary. Additionally, throughout the period from 1908 to 1938 an unknown but not inconsiderable number of Marra people continued to live full lives on their own country according to their own traditions, with minimal influence or interactions with Munanga. For these people the practical application of traditional knowledge held by previous generations of Marra people continued, for example, traversing coastal areas by dugout canoe and maintaining relationships with islands and large areas of coastline and

Langford Smith’s office, that she fell pregnant and that Langford Smith had assisted her to obtain an abortion” (Harris 1998: 227). Langford Smith was dismissed by CMS but they did not charge him with moral misconduct. See Harris (1998: 226–231) for a more detailed discussion.
mangrove ecosystems. This knowledge was also being transmitted to new generations as children were being born and raised on country throughout this period.

Higher order ceremonies like Gunabibi and Yabuduruwa were still being carried out, presumably in ways similar or very similar to how they would have been carried out prior to the arrival of Munanga. In 1935, anthropologist Donald Thomson passed through the Roper River mission en route to an extensive expedition through Arnhem Land. He relied heavily on the skills and knowledge of adults from the mission (presumably those forced to live outside mission boundaries) who appear to have clearly maintained their knowledge of navigating and living in marine environments. He left the Roper River Mission in the dry of 1935, setting out to meet up with the ketch St Nicholas that was to be his sea-faring transport. This part of the journey shows mission residents to be adept navigators and hunters:

I shared a dugout canoe with five Aborigines of whom two men formed the crew – wielding the bow and stern paddles respectively – and an old woman, a young woman and her child, four dogs, our swags, and a quantity of stores...

On the voyage down to Roper it required constant vigilance to keep the little convoy together. No sooner would we get under way after a halt than someone would sight a water ‘goanna’ or monitor lizard (Varanus) sunning itself on a mangrove limb overhanging the water. Our paddlers would exercise a deft manoeuvre, almost precipitating disaster, to swing our canoe backwards – and so give full scope to the hunter in the leading canoe – standing up now, tense and rigid, with spear poised awaiting his opportunity when the quarry came within range... Food was plentiful, and at the wayside camps we employed our time in hunting geese, ducks, wallabies and kangaroos. (Thomson and Peterson 2003: 37–38)

Through Thomson’s reports, it is evident that at the time many others, including Marra people, were not residing in the mission but rather subsisting in coastal areas. He describes a stopover at the mouth of the Roper River where they had anchored near a "large Aboriginal camp":

This camp consisted, at that time, chiefly of members of the Nunggubuyu tribe, with a few members from the Wandarang, Mara, Yukul, Ngandi, and other tribes of the Roper River area... There were about eighty or ninety people in the camp at that time; they had gathered in preparation for a ceremony, and were subsisting by dugong hunting in the Limmen Bight to the south of the mouth of the Roper River. (Thomson and Peterson 2003: 38)

Citing this and other evidence, the Maria Island and Limmen Bight River Region Land Claim Book,
... confirms that the Marra retained contact with their country during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. For instance, Smith, a missionary at the Roper Mission from the late 1920s to the mid 1930s wrote that:

"The natives at the Limmen River are still in their native state". (Olney 2002: 66, citing Smith 1936: 255)

South-east of Marra country, the township of Borroloola had officially existed since 1885 and had undoubtedly attracted Marra people and Marra-speaking people to its environs. Some of the iconic photographic portraiture taken by anthropologists Spencer and Gillen in Borroloola in 1901 (see Spencer et al. 2005) is of Marra people, young and old, adorned with cicatrices and without Munanga clothes. During this period however, Borroloola as a township was struggling, with only a handful of non-Indigenous residents remaining by the turn of the century. In 1901, Baldwin Spencer described it as dying and returned ten years later to find it "absolutely dead" (Roberts 2005: 90). With no population data available it is unknown how many Aboriginal people visited or lived near Borroloola in the early 1900s, but we can assume that a number of Marra people gravitated to the town and its environs.

Figure 2–1: A group of Yanyuwa and Marra men who share a camp, Macarthur River, Northern Territory, Australia, November–December 1901. Photographers, Walter Baldwin Spencer and Frank J. Gillen. Baldwin Spencer Collection. Courtesy Museum Victoria (XP14326).

Meanwhile, the pastoral industry began to settle down. The violence that was so prevalent in previous decades also declined, largely due to the earliest pastoralists’
efforts at “making people quiet” (Merlan 1978). The industry simultaneously shrank; after its tumultuous beginnings many stations were deemed unviable and abandoned. Marra country was affected by the leasing of St Vidgeon station in around 1920 that covered a significant portion of non-coastal land, but it appears that the impact on Marra people was not historically significant.26

2.3.5 LANGUAGE SITUATION: PIDGIN ENGLISH, CREOLISATION AND THE STATUS OF MARRA

An English-based pidgin was already well-established in the region prior to the establishment of the Roper River Mission (Harris 1986) and the increasingly sedentary conditions brought about by the mission presented a fertile environment for the pidgin to develop further. One of the mission’s earliest Aboriginal residents, Barnabas Roberts, told Sharpe that the pidgin became a lingua franca at the inception of the mission (Sharpe 1975: 2). An early report from the mission also indicates this:

“Pidgin” English is not supposed to be spoken but it is evidently very hard to adhere to this rule. The children amongst themselves speak in “Pidgin” English mixed with native words. (Elsie Masson in Munro 2004: 68)

It is unclear – and impossible to determine – whether early observers like Roberts and Masson were discussing language varieties that linguists would label a pidgin or a creole and whether the ‘native words’ mixed in were examples of code-switching, part of language acquisition processes or borrowing into a pidgin or creole. It is clear, though, that an English-based pidgin was established as a lingua franca from the mission’s inception and that creolisation subsequently occurred.

While the Roper region is widely acknowledged as the first place in which a creole emerged in Northern Australia, there are still varying ideas on when and where creolisation occurred. Harris and Sandefur both contend that creolisation took place at the Roper River Mission in the early years of the mission. Sandefur states that:

The oldest positively identified mother tongue speakers of Kriol are the first generation of the children who grew up at the mission station. (Sandefur 1985a: 211)

26 St Vidgeon station does not often feature in Marra oral histories in comparison with other more distant stations such as O.T. Downs, Nutwood Downs, Hodgson Downs and Tanumbirini, indicating it was less significant to Marra people, despite it operating on and near Marra country.
Harris points out that in the 1980s in Ngukurr, “there are four generations of people who speak Kriol as their primary language”, it being “the primary language of ... people who were born in the decade immediately following the establishment of the mission” (Harris 1986: 301). Munro’s perspective on creolisation in the Roper Region varies, in that she argues that between 1920 and 1940 (and beyond) NT Pidgin was undergoing stabilisation and that circumstances conducive for creole emergence occurred after 1940 (Munro 2004: 75–76). Munro also emphasises the three-way importance of the mission, camps on pastoral stations and World War II army camps in creolisation processes, whereas Harris and Sandefur focus primarily on the role of the Roper River Mission in creolisation. Anthropologist John Bern did not comment on creolisation processes, but his fieldwork in the 1970s seems to support Harris and Sandefur’s notion that creolisation may have occurred in the early years of the Roper River Mission. Bern found that two groups could be distinguished among the population of Ngukurr in the early 1970s: the first group being what he called the ‘village core’ – families who were established in the mission early on and have ties from before 1940 with key figures who were regarded as founders of the community – and the second group being those who arrived later than 1940. Bern found that the early residents:

... were not totally estranged from traditional association but much of their lifestyles had to be modified to cope with the new environment. Those that made the settlement their home accepted certain cultural changes which brought them together, and separated them from other Aborigines who remained in the bush or migrated to the surrounding cattle stations. The most obvious change was the sedentary life under mission patronage. Mission teaching also had some effect for by the mid 1920s most of the core had been baptised. (Bern 1974: 106–107)

Bern’s observations suggest that this ‘village core’ were in a prime position to play key roles in creolisation and be among the first people to use Kriol as their primary language, which accords more with the perspectives of Harris and Sandefur than of Munro. This is further suggested by the recollections of an early mission child Dinah Garadji, born at Roper River Mission in 1923 and educated and accommodated there:

All the children, they never use their Language. Nearly all the generation didn’t _oldei_ ['usually'] learn, you know, because we were learning English. But we didn’t learn that English very well too. (Garadji 2004: 22)

In terms of actual language use in the region at this time, data is scarce. Munro (2004) and Harris (1986) provide some examples, one of the best being a short narrative reported by an early missionary describing how one resident influenced another to come to the mission:
Me been go alonga camp; me been takem slate, pencil. Me been catchem Dennis and been yabber, yabber alonga slate. Me been makem A B C plenty time. Dennie been look hard feller. Byne-by him been talk: 'Me like makem all-e-same, which way, you savy?' 'Missionary, him teach em me and all about. You come alonga Mission, him teach em you, all same.' Dennie been talk, 'Me like come up,' so me been bring him along dinghy. (Joynt 1918: 17)

Despite being around 100 years old, the above passage is clearly related to contemporary Kriol. Some clauses are indistinguishable, such as,

Dennie been look hard feller. Byne-by him been talk...

This is lexically and syntactically identical to a contemporary rendering:

(2.1) Deni bin luk hadbala. Bambai imin tok...
Dennie looked closely/hard. After a while he said...

[Own transcription and translation]

The above passage contains some archaisms not heard today, such as *yabber, plenty time*, and the use of the pronoun *me* with the past tense marker *been*[^27], but overall the passage suggests that in the mission’s earliest years a stable pidgin was in use, could be used without code-switching or mixing of traditional languages and that it is closely related to the creole used 100 years later.

Another interesting aspect of Joynt’s short report is that it contains an early rare example of lexical influence from traditional language(s). In discussing the diet of Aboriginal people, Joynt lists:

Yams, lily (chow-chow), lily (yalbourn), lily (guniyah), small nuts, black and green plums, three kinds of black currants, white and red currants, wild orange, wild banana, creeper (passion fruit), cucumbers, wild melon, wild potato, wild rice (two kinds – swamp and sandridge), wild cocoanuts (nuts of a palm tree), pandanus seeds, nut from nutwood tree, wild fig (guninyarra). (Joynt 1918: 4)

This list includes four lexemes from local languages and their inclusion indicates that they must have been frequently used to warrant their inclusion in a document written for non-Indigenous audiences with negligible interest in Aboriginal languages. These four lexemes also provide clues as to what traditional languages were prevalent or had influence in the mission’s early years. Table 2–1 shows the cognates of these lexemes:

[^27]: In contemporary Kriol, *mi bin* is ungrammatical. Only *ai bin* is used.
Joynt (1918) | Contemporary Kriol | Referent | Other language attestations
---|---|---|---
*Chow-chow* | Jojo | Lilystalk (stalk of *Nymphaea violacea*) | *Jawjaw*: Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngalakgan, Ngandi
*Yalbourn* | Yarlbun | Seedpod of lily | *Yarlbun*: Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang
*Guniyah* | Garnaya | Bulb of lily | *Garnaya*: Marra, Warndarrang
*Guninyarra* | not used | “Tree with large reddish figs, *Ficus racemosa*” (Heath 1981: 457) | *Guninyarra*: Marra, Alawa, Nunggubuyu

Table 2–1: Local Aboriginal language words occurring in Joynt (1918)

Note that the only common language for all four lexemes is Marra, which suggests that Marra speakers and their language had some prominence in the mission even when pidgin English was possibly a lingua franca and undergoing creolisation. Note also that the above data contrasts with some claims that “Nunggubuyu was functioning as a lingua franca” at the mission (Harris 1998: 137) in that the terms Joynt listed are barely attested in that language. Interestingly, Nunggubuyu was the only language with which Bible translation was attempted at the Roper River mission. Harris claims this was, in part, because Nunggubuyu “was the only traditional language spoken by a majority of the Roper residents” (1998: 137) and also because it was the only language occurring in both of the CMS missions in the region at the time: Angurugu (on Groote Eylandt) and Roper River mission. The evidence in Table 2–1 and throughout the present thesis shows that Marra has had significant lexical influence on Kriol and Nunggubuyu had very little. This suggests that Marra was spoken just as widely, if not more so, than Nunggubuyu at the Roper River Mission. I contend that Marra was overlooked for consideration in Bible translation in favour of Nunggubuyu not because Marra was less prevalent but because it was widely spoken in only one CMS mission.

During this era, however, there were still a significant proportion of Marra people not based at the Roper River Mission, as discussed in §2.3.4. A sizeable group was still living permanently or semi-permanently on country, especially around the Limmen Bight River area. These people would have maintained the use of Marra as an L1 and lingua franca. Those who interacted with the mission and/or Borroloola township would have had some L2 competency in English, pidgin English and/or Kriol, but oral history evidence as

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28 Heath gives two names for this tree in Nunggubuyu (1982b). The other one, *yibugung*, is the only one that occurs in the volume of ethnographic texts (Larrangana in Heath 1980b: 480), which suggests it may be the preferred Nunggubuyu term and that *guninyarra* is possibly a borrowing from Marra/Alawa.
well as documentary evidence in §2.3.4 indicates that some people knew little or no English. It can be assumed that bilingualism or multilingualism was still widespread among L1 Marra speakers, speaking neighbouring languages such as Yanyuwa, Alawa and/or Nunggubuyu. Small populations of Marra people would likely have been living on stations such as St Vidgeons, Macarthur, Nathan River and Hodgson Downs as well as in the vicinity of Borroloola. It is not clear to what extent people in those areas had adopted NT Pidgin and when, but in those environments Marra speakers would have been in the minority, dominated by speakers of other Aboriginal languages associated with that country or by NT Pidgin.

This era also saw the beginnings of forced removals of Aboriginal people from their traditional areas to foreign locations, and some Marra people (including Marra speakers) were certainly affected. Public health policies, in particular the Leprosy Ordinance 1928 legislation (see Parry 2003), saw the “compulsory isolation of diseased people” such as those suffering from leprosy who were segregated from family and country by policies of “invasive surveillance, capture – via subterfuge if necessary – and compulsory detention” (Hughes 2005: 85). The forced removal of leprosy sufferers from the region, most notably to the leprosarium on Channel Island (near Darwin), occurred despite international medical experts challenging the efficacy of isolating practices (Parry 2003: 8), supporting the argument that “there is no mistaking tropical medicine as part of the military and colonial enterprise” (Bashford 2000: 252) contributing to European efforts to gain control of the north.

Policies and ideologies that saw Aboriginal people with non-Aboriginal heritage (labelled ‘half-castes’) treated quite distinctly from other Aboriginal people by authorities had further impacts on Marra people. For example, Baldwin Spencer, appointed as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory in 1911, compiled an influential report that stated:

No half-caste children should be allowed to remain in any native camp, but they should all be withdrawn and placed on stations. So far as practicable, this plan is now being adopted. In some cases, when the child is very young, it must of necessity be accompanied by its mother, but in other cases, even though it may seem cruel to separate the mother and child, it is better to do so, when the mother is living, as is usually the case, in a native camp. (Spencer 1913: 47)

From the inception of the Roper River Mission, part-Aboriginal children were taken there from around the Roper Region and from Borroloola. Some were forcibly removed by police and some were brought there by missionaries themselves. Harris argues that
missionaries did not forcibly remove children and also that some were brought there by
their Aboriginal mothers (1998: 359). The increasing number of mixed heritage children
at the Roper River Mission prompted CMS to establish a new mission specifically for
them. The Emerald River mission was prepared in 1921 and in 1924 thirty-five
Aboriginal children of mixed descent were compulsorily transferred there, separating
them from family members, including their own mothers in some instances. Although
missionaries ensured some contact was maintained, those children – including children
of Marra heritage – were taken to Groote Eylandt for a decade or more and disconnected
from family, their traditional land, heritage, culture and language. They were also blocked
from any significant contact with Anindilyakwa speaking people who are indigenous to
Groote Eylandt. As such, it seems likely that traditional Aboriginal languages were barely
used among those at Emerald River mission, given the linguistically heterogeneous mix
of children taken there, the age at which they were taken there and the lack of
intergenerational contact they had that could foster the acquisition of heritage languages.

2.3.6 MARRA PEOPLE OF THIS PERIOD AND THEIR LIVES

During this period there would have been a high degree of variability in the kinds of lives
that Marra people were leading. As discussed above, some children would have been
mission residents, with some becoming so enshrined in that life that they became what
Bern refers to as the ‘village core’. Some were more transient and interacted with the
mission to various degrees but did not reside there permanently. Given that the mission
dealt “only with children” (Love 1915: 48), adults were left to their own devices to a large
degree. Some lived in the vicinity of settlements like the Roper River Mission or
Borroloola, others in the vicinity of the few pastoral stations that were operating. Still
others had little or no contact with Munanga and were able to maintain language,
traditions and lifestyles that were deeply rooted in pre-contact times.

A number of Marra-speaking people who were born and grew up during this period have
contributed to this study, albeit inadvertently given that most have since passed away.
Many of them assisted linguists in decades past with documentation and analysis of the
language. In addition, they naturally also profoundly influenced the Marra speakers who
did contribute directly to the present study, being part of the same family networks and
sharing their life experiences and cultural knowledge with them in years past. Documentation on the lives of Marra-speaking people during this period who were adults is scant. Many of them spent much of their time in the bush and missionaries prioritised Christianising and ‘civilising’ and targeted children rather than adults, hence lives of Marra adults appear to have been rarely documented. Later, linguists such as Jeffrey Heath and Ken Hale elicited Marra and ethnographic texts from people such as Mack Manguji Riley and Nangurru (Johnnie). Heath estimated that Nangurru was born in the 1900s and Manguji around 1910; his brother is pictured in Figure 2–2. The oldest Marra speaker who participated in the present study was Topsy Mindirriju Numamurdirdi. I estimate that she was born around 1930 in the Limmen Bight area. She had three children while still living in the area. In giving evidence for the Limmen Bight land claim hearing, she described how she lived in the Limmen Bight area for a long time, traversing the area firstly with her parents, then later with her husband and then her children. Her third child was born around 1948 while Topsy was still based in the Limmen Bight River district (Numamurdirdi 1980: 242–245). Topsy offered a short autobiographical account of her early life as part of the Marra documentation project that accompanied the present study. An edited version is given below, but a glossed transcript of the conversation, including other participants’ contributions, is reproduced fully in Appendix 6:

(2.2)  

I was living at Wunubarri. We would go down to lower ground (for) fish. We would harpoon dugong. There, they would harpoon it. We would take it back to higher ground. We were staying there at Wunubarri. That’s your country there (said to FR). We would go to Mirniji, we would go to Wirrinyanggu. We’d always go to Wirrinyanggu. We would go down to lower ground, they would harpoon a dugong, at Wunubarri. At Wunubarri, they would harpoon the dugong. We were living right there.

I had (my) eldest (child) at that time. Manjayu. The other one: Abaju. Roy Hammer. We lived there a long time until the next one came along, that one... Malangaya’s father. Jack William. We stayed there until I lost (the father) of Abaju and company. We stayed there for a long time until we came here. We came here. To higher land: the Roper River Mission. I had those (children) then. My (children): Abaju, Manjayu, and the other one... Jack William. I had them at that time.

Topsy and her story are somewhat exceptional. As she was growing up in the Limmen Bight River district in the 1930s, the majority of Marra people were living or interacting to a greater degree with Munanga and their culture, via missions, stations or the town of Borroloola. Topsy is an example of someone who was able to fully or significantly maintain the use and knowledge of Marra language and culture during this era, though not all Marra people were able to do so.

Gerald (Gerry) Blitner was a traditional owner of the Nayirrinji estate and came to the Roper River Mission in 1920 as a baby. Because Gerald also had non-Aboriginal heritage (his father was white but left the region while Gerald was very young), at the age of four he was separated from his mother Sarah and sent to the new CMS mission for so-called ‘half-castes’ at Emerald River on Groote Eylandt. Gerald spoke English, Kriol and learned the language of Groote Eylandt, Anindilyakwa (Thomas 2011: 383) but apparently did not acquire Marra, his primary heritage language. His testimony at the Limmen Bight Land Claim hearing demonstrates how government and mission policies intervened and prevented him from maintaining strong ties to his Marra heritage, for example:
Gerald: ... We became children to Malachai through his adoption or his promise of our mother to him. I left Roper at the age of four and went over to Groote... We came back regularly to see our parents... and then I came and lived here for three years to do stock work. ...

Mr Laurie: Were you ever taken down and shown your country?

Gerald: Not by him at that stage, because we were not allowed to leave the mission. (G. Blitner 1980: 74–75)

Gerald led a remarkable life, functioning confidently in European domains as well as in the bush or in coastal environments like those that Groote Eylandters subsisted off in the early to mid-1900s. One of his greatest achievements in a European domain was holding the chairman position at the Northern Land Council from 1980–1983. Much earlier, utilising his cultural knowledge and bush skills, Gerald played a vital but largely ignored role as a navigator and cultural broker for a number of researchers who spent three months on Groote Eylandt as part of the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. Martin Thomas’ (2011) tender account of Gerry’s role in this mission, based on extended interviews, also demonstrates the unfortunate susceptibility for people of mixed descent to become marginalised, as Gerry had been by the expedition’s researchers, despite the crucial role he played:

Even as a photographic subject, he was generally avoided as a waste of film. [Charles] Mountford in particular kept him well outside the frame. My heart sank when, after the interview, I showed Gerry the 1949 National Geographic article on the Expedition, written by Mountford. Given all he had done to support it, he expected to find a photo of himself. There was none, and his disappointment was palpable. (Thomas 2011: 384)

Authoritarian policies of missionaries and distant governments had intervened in Gerald’s life, separating him from his heritage language and culture. Many others were surely in the same position. Marra people with some non-Indigenous heritage would at worst have been affected by removal policies, or at least have experienced prejudice, as Blitner did. Other Marra people with Aboriginal-only heritage suffered different fates, such as Maureen Thompson’s brother who was sent to a leprosarium as a young man and died not long after, never to return to his homeland (Normand and Thompson 2009).

Others like Dinah Garadji (born 1923) fit the brief of a person suitable for care at the Roper River Mission. A ‘full-blood’ healthy child to a Nunggubuyu mother and a Warndarrang father who both spoke Marra, she was born at the old Mission site, Mirlingbarrwarr, and educated there under the dormitory system. An edited compilation of her memoirs (Garadji 2004) does mention some positives (“when I went to school I
really loved it” (ibid: 19)) but mostly Garadji describes the conditions mission children endured as strict, difficult and heavily routined:

In the morning we’d wake up and before breakfast we used to go out and collect firewood. That was the first job. Then after breakfast straight to school. Then we’d go to service. Then we’d have a rest in the dormitory. At night we do some weeding, pulling up grass, in the garden or clean our dress and all. We never went back to our Mum and Dad, nothing. We had evening service at the back of the dormitory but no walking around. It was strict and we’d get in trouble from missionaries if we did something wrong. That was Mr and Mrs Port back in the early days. She had a whip and that man had a big belt, leather one... There were different dormitories for boys and girls. We weren’t allowed to visit our parents. *Im* ['it'] sort of a *nogud* ['bad'], you know. No family just locked up in the dormitory at bedtime and lunchtime... Children didn’t run away much. They were frightened, to get hiding, you know. (ibid: 18–19)


In 1940, a major flood caused the inhabitants of the beleaguered Roper River Mission to flee to higher ground and eventually establish a new site for the mission at Ngukurr – the main fieldsite for the present study. Accounts of the flood can be found in Ngalakgan by Edna Nyuluk (in Merlan 1983) and in English by Dinah Garadji and Gertie Huddlestone, included in the detailed discussion provided by Edmonds (2007a: 41). The relocation of the Roper River Mission provides a convenient milestone that can be used to introduce a new era that is notable for: the mission growing in influence before ultimately ceasing to exist; the pastoral industry resurging in importance; the last Marra people ceasing to live on country permanently; and Marra people now acquiring only Kriol and their traditional language weakening further, exacerbated by mission language policies that prohibited its use.

2.4.1 THE LAST DECADES OF THE ROPER RIVER MISSION

Following the flood of 1940, the Roper River Mission re-established on higher ground, near a rocky outcrop named Ngukurr. Marra people continued to have a strong presence at the mission although they were never a majority and other Marra people were still living on pastoral stations, other missions, at Borroloola and – in the 1940s and perhaps early 1950s – some were still spending months or years living on country. Despite the new location, the mission maintained its use of separate dormitories for boys and girls (see, for example, Edmonds 2007a: 46). The role of the mission began to evolve however.
Government policies were changing from ones based on views that Aboriginal people were part of a dying race, to assimilationist policies that led governments to “acknowledge and accommodate [Aboriginal people] in their administrative capacity” (Edmonds 2007a: 77). As government increasingly invested in Aboriginal affairs, missions like Roper River became government-funded conduits for the delivery of basic services such as health and education. These changes meant that the Church Missionary Society’s operations in the Roper Region became less focused on its evangelical goals. The increased government involvement in Aboriginal affairs and welfare contributed to the mission being ultimately handed over into government administration in 1968. It was during this period that the CMS most strictly enforced policies forbidding the use of Marra and other Aboriginal languages in school, according to government requirements. These experiences are still remembered by senior people in Ngukurr and are described in greater detail below.

2.4.2 “I DON’T WANT TO HEAR THAT CRAP, THAT LANGUAGE” – LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE ROPER RIVER MISSION

After World War II, the CMS demonstrated positive changes in their attitude towards Aboriginal languages, in contrast with previous decades in which they were officially neglected. In 1944, the Church Missionary Society’s policy included the following statement:

All Missionaries shall, in general, study a suitable native language, and native social customs and laws, for it is an essential part of the policy of the Society that the natives shall not be cut off from their own tribal life, but rather that the Mission shall aim at the far more difficult task of helping those natives to build up the Kingdom of God on the basis of their old tribal organisation and customs, where these are not opposed to Christianity. (in Harris 1998: 136)

Despite greater official recognition, the application of this policy appears to have been haphazard (Harris 1998). And although the CMS began to better acknowledge the value of local languages, any benefits this brought to languages like Marra at the Roper River Mission were curtailed when increased government funding and control from the 1950s onwards resulted in the CMS having less autonomy over many services they provided, including education. As a result, CMS were required to follow government policy which was to teach English (presumably in English) and discourage Aboriginal languages (Harris 1998: 148).

We can assume that this is the period – the 1950s and 1960s – that many middle-aged and older residents in Ngukurr refer to when they recount stories about missionaries.
banning Aboriginal languages from the school and missionaries punishing students if they used, or were thought to be using, traditional languages. The health of languages of the region such as Marra had by this stage been under severe stress and decline for several decades. The explicit denigration caused by missionaries enacting government policies undoubtedly had a further impact on Marra and other languages and most likely caused psychological trauma for individuals and sociological trauma for language communities.

Individual testimonies of punishment and denigration are common to all who were students at the Roper River Mission school in this period. Claims that there was not a “consistent policy by missionaries at Roper River Mission of trying to stop Aborigines using the languages of their homelands” and that testimony of punishment “seems unusual” (Seiffert 2011: 212–213) do not accord with my own findings. Some years ago, a Ngandi language worker at the Ngukurr Language Centre recounted one such tale to me:

He told me that one time, his teacher heard him speaking his language, Ngandi. His teacher took him into the store room, got a stick and belted him 15 times. After that, his teacher made him write lines. He had to write 50 times, “I must not speak Language at school.” He reckons he was about 8 or 10 years old at the time and he remembers the name of that teacher. (Dickson 2006)

Children from all language groups were subjected to this sort of treatment. Sharpe’s Alawa dictionary notes that “children and young people were not allowed to talk language, not even Kriol – if they did, as one of them put it: washim mawus garram sop” (wash mouth with soap) (Sharpe 2001a: xvi). Through fear and threats, parents went along with policies. In (2.3), Cherry Daniels and Betty Roberts describe how English-only policies and other strict measures affected parents of schoolchildren:

(2.3)

1 CD: Thei bin braiden du, melabat eberribodi bin oldei braiden, ngabi biginini. They were afraid as well. Us, everyone, we were always afraid, weren’t we (my) children.
2 BR: Yuwai. (0.9) Yes. Yes.
3 CD: Pipul bin oldei braiden. Nomo laigim enserimbe la munanga. People were always scared. (They) didn’t like to answer back (i.e. challenge) to white people
4 BR: [We were scared of them.
5 BR: Melabat nomo bin lau tokbek. We weren’t allowed to talk back.
6 CD: Nobodi bin lau tokbek. No-one was allowed to talk back.
7 BR: Answer back.
Viewed through a contemporary lens, we may wonder why Aboriginal people at the mission were not greater advocates for their own linguistic rights. The lack of direct resistance can be understood by realising that such attitudes from missionaries had dominated mission life for decades and missionaries had successfully maintained a culture of fear and punishment among their residents. Aboriginal people and families were undergoing cultural change at a swift pace and had been traumatised by other aspects of colonisation. Even though residents generally appeared not to have asserted their linguistic rights, missionaries’ actions and policies were still deemed inappropriate to those who were subjected to them. This is demonstrated in the transcript of an extended discussion recorded in 2010 with nine of the Marra documentation team present. Five of them had attended the Roper River Mission school and four of those people contribute to the following discussion.29

(2.4)

1 CD: I know la main- main- wen ai bin lilgel,
I know to me- me- when I was a girl,
2 FR: Af?
Huh?
3 CD: Bla langgus, nobodi lau tok. La skul.
Regarding language, nobody was allowed to talk. At school.
4 FR: Najing oni fo- English
Not at all, only- English
5 BR: English
6 TN: Ngarni? What?

29 The former mission student who was present but did not participate in this discussion, Maureen Thompson, later contributed a short but powerful account of her defiance of mission language policy, presented below as part of her own profile (a glossed version appears as Appendix 1).
Munanga! bin stabum nomo bla tok langgus=.
 Europeans! stopped it, not to speak language

= Nomo ba toktok bla langgus=
 Not to speak language

="Nomo toktok langgus unless yu gu la Kemp."
 Don’t speak language unless you go home

"Take your stupid language there longwei"
 Take your stupid language there far away

...

Imin hepin la melabat, melabat taim na, [in the 50s
It happened to us, in our time, in the 50s

[X XXX mishin, la Ropa Riva
X XXX mission, at Roper River

...

yuuwaai main boi e-e, wen mela bin oldei jidan na skul insaid, na la skul na, la klastaim na,
yes my son, see, when we would be sitting inside school, at school then, during classtime

"no talking"

wen mela bin oldei tok than thei reken mela toktok garra langgus,
when we would talk then they would think we are talking in (Aboriginal) language

"don’t take- talk that language, take- take it somewhere else",

"yu iya, you only speak English",
"you’re here, you only speak English",

"and you’re here to learn English",

thei bin oldei lagijat la melabat,
they would always be like that to us

"we don’t want to listen to any stupid language",

bobala, gulumbat ‘stupid langgus’ la melabat=
poor thing, calling it a ‘stupid language’ to us=

=en God bin gibit wi langgus
=and God gave us our language

Nginjani langgus?
What language?

Eni langgus= = Eni langgus, abuji
Any language= = Any language, [kinterm]

=en langgus, XX=
=any language, XX=

ai ?
huh?

thenimin oldei larri melabat la skul toktok,
they never used to let us speak at school,

ee,
oh.

deswai didei ai kaan tok main langgus Ngandi,
that’s why today I can’t speak my language Ngandi,

ee?
oh?

oni ai bin andasten
I only understood it
CD: *wen ai bin lilgel, bifo- thebin- bifo aibin gu la skul, ai bin speak the language,* when I was a girl, before- they- before I went to school, I spoke the language.

CD: *very much, aibin speak it really good,* very much. I spoke it really well.

CD: *bat wen ai bin gu la skul na, en ai bin trai tok det langgus. "no,"* but when I went to school then, and I tried to speak the language. "no".

CD: *"you wanna speak langgus, yu gu- [guwei la bush,]* you want to speak language, you go- go away to the scrub

CD: *"go back to where you st- came from"*

FR: *["guwei bek- go home la-"* go away back- go home to-

FR: *very bad, people, teachers, that time*

Note that in (2.4), the only person who did not attend the mission school and speaks during this passage is Topsy. Her surprise and queries at the information she hears is noticeable (see lines 34, 37, 39, 41 and 43). Topsy and her siblings, unlike others in that conversation, spent much more time living on the land and were better able to maintain their own linguistic and cultural practices.

### 2.4.3 MAINTAINING CULTURE, LIVING ON THE LAND AND PASTORAL INDUSTRY RESURGENCE

While this era saw the growing influence of the Roper River Mission over Marra people and those from other Aboriginal language groups in the region, the pastoral industry concurrently experienced a resurgence in the area. This had divergent impacts on Marra people. The continued mission presence increased sedentariness while those working in the pastoral industry were able to increase their interactions with country (though not usually Marra country itself). A number of stations south of the Roper River were fully operational and employed considerable numbers of people. This included stations such as St. Vidgeon, Urapunga, Moroak, Roper Valley, Elsey, Hodgson Downs, Hodgson River, Nutwood Downs, Bauhinia Downs, Tanumbirini and O.T. Downs (See Map 2–4).

Aboriginal people who worked on stations were able to maintain obligations towards country.

While travelling around the station at various tasks Aborigines maximised any opportunity to "look after" specific sites for which they had individual or group responsibility. This usually involved burning off the long grass, checking for damage by people, animals or erosion, or keeping cattle away. They avoided dangerous sites and followed sanctioned tracks where they did not have full rights to the land in question. (McGrath 1987 in Edmonds 2007a: 283)
In a short oral history, L1 Marra speaker Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi describes working on stations such as Tanumburini, O.T. Downs and Bauhinia Downs. An edited extract, taken from a fuller transcript found in Appendix 7, is given below:


Well, we ... we'd been staying here, and then I headed south. Right there is where we were working at the stock camp, (at) Tanumbirini (station) (at) O.T. Downs. We went to Tanumbirini, to the south. We’d whatchamacallit... muster cattle, we’d chase them around. By horse. We came back. We were mustering cattle. (At) Tanumbirini (and) O.T. Downs... (at) Bauhinia Downs. We’d ride horseback. (Lit: the horse would be carrying us). We’d chase after cattle. We lived there (for a
long time), alright. We were living there. And then that was it, for good. We went
down to Borroloola.

In addition to the two groups of Marra people at this time, discussed above – increasingly
sedentary mission residents subject to the denigration of their languages, and pastoral
workers who could interact with the bush and increase potential for the maintenance of
cultural practices and traditional languages – there was also a third group of Marra
people: those who remained on country. There is clear evidence that a number of Marra
people were living and subsisting on their own country at the start of this era, either
permanently or at least for extended periods. After World War II, government patrol
officers were employed to traverse the Northern Territory and report on Aboriginal
populations. The *Maria Island and Limmen Bight Land Claim* book reports that:

In late 1944 patrol officer Harney noted Marra people as inhabiting the Limmen
River and coastal areas to the south. He also indicated that the Marra, along with
other coastal people were being removed to the Barkly Tableland pastoral
properties.30 This deliberate displacement was not totally successful. In 1951
patrol officer Sweeney recorded 25 people from the Limmen River who visited
the Roper Mission demonstrating that Aboriginal people were living at least part
of the time near the claim area. (Olney 2002: 66)

Further evidence presented at the 1980 Limmen Bight land claim by former missionary
Percy Leskie goes further, placing “Marra occupation of the Limmen River area up until at
least the 1960s” (Olney 2002: 67). Leskie outlines a pattern of semi-permanent
occupation by a number of adults:

People like Stanley and Andai and the Rileys and so forth would be away a lot
longer than others31 ... they would turn up [at the mission] I think for a change,
for some clothes, for food and that sort of thing, and then move off again. I think
they wanted to get back to their homeland and establish an identity as a tribe
because some of the original inhabitants of this particular area were dying out ... they
wanted to maintain their clan, their race and their lifestyle. (Leskie 1980:
116 in Olney 2002: 67)

30 Note that all of the stations Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi mentions in her oral history (see
above and Appendix 7) were located in the northern part of the Barkly and so her story may
support Harney’s report.

31 Note that Anday (Andai), Mack Riley and Tom Riley were also all contributors to Jeffrey Heath’s
Some of the profiles and oral histories of Marra people offered in this chapter provide first-hand evidence that Marra people were still living on country – in particular, the Limmen Bight area – in the 1940s and beyond. See for example Topsy Mindirirju Numamurirdi’s profile and oral history given in §2.3.6 and that of Freda Miramba Roberts given below (§2.4.5). Another narrative that demonstrates in detail how Marra people maintained ties to their culture and country in this era was written by Holly Ngarlilwarra Daniels (see Appendix 8). Holly was the youngest sister of Betty Roberts (profiled in §2.4.5) but passed away in the 1990s. She became principal of Ngukurr School in the 1980s after receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Deakin University. In a narrative she wrote in the 1990s, *Holly-girl* (Daniels 2004b: 45–49), Daniels shows that despite her mission upbringing she spent considerable time during this era on country (by virtue of pastoralism and those living on country) and acquired first-hand knowledge and experience of many cultural practices, including ceremonial practices. The events she describes would have occurred in the 1950s and large extracts of her story are reproduced in detail in Appendix 8. Her narrative encompasses many aspects discussed throughout this chapter, such as the impact of the pastoral industry, the maintenance and importance of ceremony, knowledge of traditional food, the importance of family and country (especially named sites), evolving methods of travel i.e. foot, canoe, horse, the centrality of the Limmen River area to Marra people and their culture and, finally, the mission causing increased levels of sedentariness.

By 1968 – the conclusion of this era – Marra people had finally ceased living permanently on their country after innumerable generations of continual presence. Changes occurred in the pastoral industry as well when Aboriginal people’s involvement was reduced significantly after they were awarded equal pay with non-Aboriginal workers, resulting in many being laid off. From this point onwards, the lives of Marra people become increasingly sedentary and centred on built environments, discussed further in §2.5.

### 2.4.4 LANGUAGE ECOLOGY – KRIOL TAKES HOLD

In 1942, a schoolteacher reported on the language ecology at the Roper River mission:

> We touch people of eleven dialects, and there is no lingua franca except pidgin English. ... The people think and speak in pidgin. (in Harris 1998: 138)

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32 The English version reproduced in Appendix 8 is actually a translation by Cherry Daniels of Holly’s original text, written in Kriol, *Holigel*. Both versions appear in *Blekbala Stori* (Deakin University (Faculty of Arts) 2004).
Margaret Sharpe visited the Roper Mission between 1966 and 1968, documenting and describing a number of languages, primarily Alawa (see, for example, 1972; 2001a). Notably, she also did some early description of the local creole, yet to be named ‘Kriol’ (Sharpe 1975). Her notes parallel aspects of the contemporary situation and indicate that the creole was well established. Sharpe found that Kriol was already the usual language of communication for older people and the first language of younger people. It was established enough that Sharpe saw evidence of creole-English bilingualism and code switching:

Those fluent in English clearly differentiate the two [i.e. English and Kriol] and rarely mix them. (Sharpe 1975: 1)

However, Sharpe also noted a significant degree of variability among people’s creole. She raises the possibility of different language groups having slightly different dialects due to substrate influences although does not explore this in detail (Sharpe 1975: 3).

As for Marra people working on pastoral stations in the region that still employed and accommodated Aboriginal people, Munro notes that “station camps became communities” and that the lingua franca in station camps/communities was not traditional languages, but rather NT Pidgin or Kriol (Munro 2004: 73). It can also be assumed that speakers of traditional languages at these locations had regular opportunities to use those languages with other adult family members, spouses and fellow Aboriginal station workers. Marra people were also represented among those living in Borroloola: Kirton mentions a small group living at Malandarri with other Aboriginal groups, quite separately from the non-Indigenous enclave in Borroloola (1988: 3). In Borroloola and on pastoral stations throughout the region Marra people were never the dominant group and so maintaining the use of their language would have been limited to intra-family and interpersonal communications. Communication in broader domains would have taken place in Kriol, NT Pidgin or more dominant local languages such as Yanyuwa (in Borroloola) or Alawa (at Hodgson Downs and Hodgson River stations). As described above, however, some Marra people were still spending significant periods of time in the Limmen Bight district, especially in the 1940s and early 1950s. It appears as though those people were maintaining their use of Marra, either as their main language of communication or alongside Kriol or a pidgin. This is supported by evidence such as Topsy Mindirijju Numamurdirdi (see her brief oral history in §2.3.6) continuing to favour Marra as her dominant language (perhaps alongside Nunggubuyu) even today. She left the Limmen Bight area in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Likewise, Freda Miramba Roberts arrived at the Roper River Mission in the late 1940s or early
1950s as a young girl with no knowledge of English or Pidgin English, having spent her early years also in the Limmen Bight district (see §2.4.5.1). In an interview in 2011, she spoke of her early experiences of school at the Roper River Mission, using Marra to discuss the language barrier she had to confront:


I didn't speak any English at all. I was still speaking Marra. I would listen to them, the other children, talking to each other. They were speaking English. And me, I didn't understand English at all. I was listening and listening to those children, who were there at school... only Marra I was speaking. Marra, my language.

When Marra people ceased spending extended periods of time living on country, it appears as though the intergenerational transmission of the language was finally broken and no-one since has acquired Marra as a first language. Those who had acquired it still had some opportunity to use it with siblings, peers and older relatives. A number of people born and raised at Roper River Mission appear to have gained good passive knowledge of the language, but by 1968, Kriol was clearly the dominant language across the entire population of Marra people.

### 2.4.5 **Marra People of this Period and Their Lives**

This era was very prominent in the lives of most of the elders who contributed to the present study. It is therefore possible to profile a number of them in detail, incorporating first-hand accounts of various aspects of life during this period. These profiles also serve to recognise the elders who contributed heavily to the present thesis. During this period, most Marra people were in close proximity of Munanga, away from their own country – either at the Roper River Mission, on pastoral stations or at Borroloola. There were, however, some people still living on country subsisting in ways much like their ancestors had done, as Freda Roberts' autobiographical narrative below indicates.

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33 Freda’s reference to English here likely refers to any English-based varieties she encountered, including standard English, pidgin English or an English-based creole.
2.4.5.1 Freda Miramba Roberts

Freda was one of only two fully fluent speakers of Marra living in Ngukurr at the time of this study – fluent to the degree that she could speak Marra for extended periods without significant code-switching or tiring noticeably. Freda’s contribution to the documentation of Marra in recent years was probably the most significant of any individual. Aged in her seventies, I knew her as an old woman with quite a rough exterior, sometimes quick to judge, swear and grumble. This belied a warmth and softness that was never far from the surface. Her default facial expression was one that made her seem unimpressed or tired, but it took little more than remembering a pleasant experience or sharing a fond moment with a family member and her face would crinkle and reveal that warmth.

Freda’s life story is remarkable. She and her siblings were part of the last few Marra people to come in from the bush – that is, to leave a life of living off the land to take up permanent residency in the Roper River Mission. Her munyurnyunu ‘cross-cousin’ Simon brought her and her siblings to the mission in the 1940s when she was “might be… around about twelve years old” (Collins 1998: 25). Prior to her arrival, she spoke only traditional languages, predominantly Marra, but also Yanyuwa and Nunggubuyu. Her earliest years consisted of living with close relatives in the coastal regions of Marra country, particularly around her birthplace, Limmen Bight, which is also where her
traditional country, Wunubarri, is located. Life for Freda at this time would have involved subsisting off the land and water and traversing Marra country by foot and canoe. Collins (1998) offers a brief, warm biography, which includes a version of the life-changing event of Freda’s travels to and arrival in the mission, penned by Freda herself. In 2010, Freda gave a further account of these events, which would have occurred in the 1940s:


Then, they talked together, the elders: ”What will we do, go up the river, or continue on the Roper (River Mission) now?”. It was my cousin who spoke: "We go on to the mission". Because he wanted to send us to school here. We all passed three rivers, three big rivers. The first river – big river – is my country, Limmen River. And one... the second one: Wuniyarri is what they call that river, and the other one is Jalbirriyu. Three big rivers. We had to get on to what’s-it-then, canoes, to cross over those rivers. It was my cousin, Simon, he had a large canoe, it was with that one that we arrived. And the others as well, my mother’s mother’s group, they had another canoe as well. We climbed in there and continued. We talked together, "what, will we go to Wamunggu (Maria Lagoon)?". "No, we’re going now, to Roper (River Mission)” they said. "We’re going to go on to the Roper (River Mission) now. We’ll leave these children at school.” There we were. We came, the whole way. Camping the whole way at a place there at Nganiyan.girri, at one place called Nyarlman, came right up to Rawurdawu. We came the whole way, right up to the mouth (of the Roper River), where my mother’s mothers’ group – they wanted to go that way then. The group of old Ngayawu and Yabumana – they wanted to return then, to Wyagiba. We left each other at the (river) mouth. We separated ourselves right there. They went on in this direction then, to Wyagiba, and they farewelled us. "We’re going to Roper (River Mission) now, we are", he said. "We’re
going to Wiyagiba. Ok, bye.\textquotedblright, they said to us, farewelling us. And we came. My cousin brought us here to school.

Complementing this story is Freda's short Marra text, reproduced in §2.4.4 above, on how she arrived at the mission with no knowledge of English or Kriol. After acclimatising to the mission, Freda went on to have a long career as a health worker at the local clinic. She started work in the late 1950s or 1960s and retired in the late 90s or early 2000s. After retirement, she remained in Ngukurr living with her daughter and grandchildren, surrounded by extended family. In the years that I knew her she rarely travelled to and interacted with Marra country. She was a regular and dedicated participant in Marra language work – teaching, training and documentation. Her contribution to the present study ranged from recording Marra (texts, conversation and elicitation), liaising with other Marra speakers and encouraging them to contribute and, most notably, many hours of working with Betty Roberts and me to transcribe and translate a wide range of Marra recordings.

I first met Freda in 2004 and only got to know her gradually over subsequent years. She had maintained her knowledge of Marra, Nunggubuyu and Yanyuwa despite the many years that had passed since she acquired them through communicative necessity. She spoke English well too but the language she spoke most often was Kriol. Her choice of language was highly pragmatic, usually speaking Marra only to others who also spoke, and preferred to speak, Marra. The majority of people she interacted with spoke Kriol as a mother tongue and so that is what Freda spoke most of the time too. For the first few years I knew her, Freda would regularly visit and use Marra with her older sister, Elsie, who was frail and housebound. As a result, family members living with Elsie had regular exposure to the language but it was not acquired. Elsie passed away in 2006 and Freda then spoke Marra infrequently. I assume she did so mostly when participating in language work. When talking to Kriol speakers who spoke no Marra, Freda appeared to rarely, if ever, incorporate Marra into her speech. While her pragmatic approach could be construed as a lack of interest or motivation to retain or promote the use of her mother tongue, her dedication to language work in recent years belies this. Occasionally, Freda explicitly expressed determination or pride for the maintenance of her language, as shown in (2.8), an excerpt of an interview Freda did in 2006 with the then Administrator of the Northern Territory, Ted Egan:

\begin{quote}
(2.8) \textit{Gana ginya n-Marra gana ngarl-ngamanji: ngina, gana ginya n-daway.}
This Marra that I'm speaking: it's mine, this language.
\end{quote}
Freda passed away in August 2013 following a short battle with cancer. This left the community of Ngukurr, for the first time, without a fully-fluent Marra speaker. The legacy of her language work on Marra will undoubtedly endure and not only through her contribution to formal language programs, research and documentation. In her last days, she told one of the community’s most talented younger Marra speakers and language workers, Anthony Daniels, that he is not to stop working on Marra in deference to her death and urged him to continue supporting the language.

2.4.5.2 Betty Naburruluyurr Roberts

Betty Roberts was born in the 1930s in or near her traditional country, Naburruluyurr, located in a freshwater area south of the Roper River. Betty is the third youngest sister in a formidable team of seven sisters sometimes known collectively as the Joshua sisters, including Dinah Garadji and Holly Daniels who have been discussed and quoted above. Betty was one of three siblings still living when this study commenced but the only one residing in Ngukurr. Throughout this study and beyond she continued her dedicated support of the Aboriginal languages of the community as well as maintaining an interest in many aspects of community life and politics. Betty is part of one of the first families to settle and succeed in mission life in the early 1900s, one of the families who make up Bern’s “village core” (1974). Betty’s father’s younger brother was Jeffrey Heath’s primary informant upon which he based his grammar of Warndarrang (1980a). Her own father spent a considerable amount of time and effort assisting Donald Thomson to traverse the Rose River and Blue Mud Bay.
area as he made his way into Arnhem Land. Betty and her sisters later became local pioneers in the movement to document and revitalise the languages of the Roper River Region, with Marra being their primary focus. Starting in the 1980s when Betty and her sisters first attended linguistic training workshops at Batchelor College (now Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education), Betty's commitment to language work has extended for decades. Betty, alongside Freda, was incredibly supportive of and valuable to the present study, providing tireless assistance and leadership with documenting, transcribing and translating Marra recordings and supporting the documentation and revitalisation of the language in general.

Betty has a very good passive knowledge of Marra, but regards herself as a learner. She is not fluent to the point of being able to speak exclusively Marra. Betty would often defer to stronger speakers such as Freda for assistance with finer points on the language, but does hold a wealth of knowledge herself, on cultural matters as well as linguistic matters. She also has passive knowledge of numerous other languages of the region and an aptitude and interest in languages. Had it not been for historical circumstances that saw her father removed to Channel Island leprosarium when she was young, leaving her to be raised in close proximity to the mission and subjected to the language ecology and ideologies fostered by the mission, she would likely have spoken many languages fluently, as her father and other immediate ancestors had.

2.4.5.3 Maureen Marranggulu Thompson

Maureen, along with Freda, was one of only two fully fluent Marra speakers who resided in the Ngukurr at the time of the study. Born at Nutwood Downs station in the 1930s, she also spoke Alawa, Kriol and had good functional English. Her early years were interspersed between the Roper River Mission and various pastoral stations as well as “three years in a humpy” with her mother at Wamunggu between the ages of 20 and 22 (Normand and Thompson 2009: 28). She also spent a number of years living in Darwin before returning to Ngukurr in the 1970s. She remained there until suffering a serious stroke in 2012, after which she required full-time care at an aged care facility in Katherine. She passed away in April 2014.

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34 Thomson’s diary refers to Betty’s father Joshua in some detail, discussing his crucial role in difficult parts of the trek and his reticence in continuing to offer assistance to Thomson as he proceeded further north (Thomson and Peterson 2003).
When I knew her, Maureen’s key role in the community was as an established artist and de facto matriarch of the local art centre. The art centre manager tells the story from when she was only a few months into the job and had not seen or heard from Maureen who had been housebound due to ill health. One Monday morning Maureen suddenly arrived, ready to paint and commenced bossing her underlings around and demanded to know why nobody had been picking her up for work. It is with this spirit that Maureen remained dearly attached to the Marra language throughout her life, despite the challenges and potentially demoralising effect of living through its decline. Following this improvement in health, Maureen made many contributions to the present study; while working daily in her primary occupation as an artist, she regularly dictated oral histories in Marra to me and could do so daily, given good health and time.

Maureen’s approach to language work was similar to Betty in that she was passionate about maintaining her language(s) and culture. Yet her approach differed somewhat from Betty, and also Freda, who both had a much gentler, cooperative approach. Maureen defiantly spoke Marra daily, often to family members who did not understand the language, thereby maintaining her language use in relative isolation. She would occasionally berate adults for not acquiring Marra, puzzled as to how that could be as she has spoken it to them for many years. And this would continue: Maureen trudging on, painting and telling her stories, as she had assumedly done her whole life. Her stubborn determination to maintain the use of Marra is exemplified by this extract of a recording she made in 2011 (a complete glossed version is reproduced in Appendix 1):

(2.9)  
\[ Gana\ n-daway\ ngarl-ngamanji\ nya-Marra-yani. \]  
I’m speaking the language from Marra (country)

\[ ngula\ wayi-ninguy\ nana\ Marra \]  
I won’t give up Marra

\[ willi\ munamunanga\ gana\ nanbili-yi\ “mingi\ wayi-wuya\ ganan-gaya\ n-daway” \]  
Europeans told me “leave the language behind now”
"ngula wayi-nganinguy nana Marra, ngina nana nanggaya, ngina n-daway, nginal"
"I can’t leave behind the Marra language, that is mine, my language, mine!"

gana ngalgu-ninguy ngaba wul-agagurr,
I’ll tell them as well as the children,

gana nangiyana gana gal-walajurra
who will grow up after me

gana guwarda-walajana gana n-gaya n-daway, guda
They will listen to this language, that’s it.

ngula wayi-nganinguy gana n-daway ngini
I won’t abandon my language

wala wul-missionary gana nanbili-yi “wayi-wuya- ganan- nana nanggaya n-daway mingi niya”
The missionaries, they told me, “Leave it- that language of yours now”.

“wayi-wuya nana Marra!”
“Abandon the Marra (language)!"

“ngula ngarl-imi”
“Don’t speak it!”

ngarl-awujanganirlana
We spoke to each other.

nana ngalurru nga-janyi, ngana n-gajirri nga-janyi
I was telling my father, I was telling my mother,

gana nanbirri-janyi
and they told me,

“ngula wayi-, ngula wayi-wuya gana n-gaya n-dan- n-daway”
“Don’t leave- don’t abandon that language”.

guda
That’s all.

2.4.5.4 Wiyagiba mob
Topsy Mindirriju Numamurdirdi, Bessie Wunyuga Numamurdirdi, Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi and Henry Juluba Numamurdirdi are three elderly sisters and their younger brother who are all fluent Marra speakers and respected and revered by other Marra people for their knowledge of traditional language and culture. I label them here
as the ‘Wiyagiba mob’, in reference to the Wiyagiba outstation on their traditional country where they lived for most of their later lives. During the present study, the Wiyagiba mob were living in Numbulwar and so their involvement was less than Betty and Freda’s (for example) but the contributions they made to the documentation of Marra were invaluable (see, for example, Appendices 6 and 7). Marra people in Ngukurr acknowledge them as experts in matters of Marra language and culture, and so the community-driven impetus to document or ‘work on’ Marra largely equates with a desire to work with the Wiyagiba mob. Therefore they were at the crux of the motivation to develop the Marra documentation program that was central to this research.

As mentioned above, the traditional homeland of these siblings is Wiyagiba. Juluba also closely associates with a site called Walanngarra, located near Limmen River. Like Freda, the Wiyagiba mob spent the early years of their life in coastal areas of the Gulf of Carpentaria, in particular around Limmen Bight. Their early lives would have closely reflected the lifestyles led by generations of Marra people before them who had not encountered Europeans. Topsy, for example, “used to go up and down, and up the river – Limmen River” with her parents, then also with her husband. She had all her children while living in the area. Her youngest child was born around 1948 and was walking by the time Topsy left her permanent life there, which she did “because nobody was living there” (Numamurdirdi 1980: 242–245). Juluba, the youngest sibling was born at Wamunggu and also grew up there, leaving as a child. (ibid: 240).

Unlike contemporaries such as Freda, the Wiyagiba mob did not settle permanently at the Roper River Mission although they did spend some time there. Their adult lives were much less sedentary, allowing for greater interaction with country, although not always, or even often, Marra country. Part of Fannie and Henry’s adult life was spent working on pastoral stations inland and to the south of their own country, including Tanumbirini, Bauhinia Downs and OT (see Appendix 7 and §2.4.3). Topsy apparently did not move around so much after leaving the Limmen River area, perhaps due to having children to raise. An account of her early life is given in §2.3.6 and Appendix 6. Bessie, with her husband, assisted missionaries to develop the mission at Angurugu on Groote Eylandt which shifted there from the Emerald River site in 1943. They went on to assist with the development of the Rose River mission (now Numbulwar), established in 1952 (Harris 1998: 12–13). Eventually, they all returned to live on their own country, at the newly established outstation at Wiyagiba. Basic housing and infrastructure was established there as part of the homeland/outstation movement of the 1970s/1980s and the ‘Wiyagiba mob’ resided there for many years until moving permanently to Numbulwar in
the mid–late 2000s. This final move was presumably due to their age and becoming unable to live independently. Bessie sadly passed away in 2014 while the remaining sibling are in Numbulwar in close proximity to each other and have now outlived all their peers who also grew up in the Limmen Bight District.

All four siblings are/were proficient in speaking Marra. Bessie did not appear to regularly speak it at length, seemingly more comfortable with speaking Nunggubuyu and Kriol/English due to her close associations with missions, especially the Rose River Mission which was dominated by Nunggubuyu people. Fannie is very comfortable speaking Marra, and can switch between Marra, Nunggubuyu and Kriol with ease. Topsy, the older sister, stands out as she speaks less Kriol than her siblings or any of the other Marra speakers I have worked with. Marra and Nunggubuyu appear to be her dominant languages, with Kriol some distance behind. Because of this, her presence in language documentation sessions triggers others to increase their use of Marra. This had a positive impact on our efforts to document Marra: for example, as mentioned above, Freda’s pragmatic approach to language use would lead her to speak Kriol more than any other
language while at Ngukurr, but when teamed with Topsy, who prefers speaking Marra, Freda would also speak Marra for sustained periods.\textsuperscript{35}

2.4.5.5 Other contributors: Donald, Cherry, those around Borroloola

Those described above played integral roles in the documentation of Marra that contributed to this study and exemplify some of the sociohistorical events discussed in this chapter. A number of other individuals with fluency in the language also shared aspects of this history and played lesser, yet still valuable, roles in informing this study.

Donald Wamurinya Blitner has excellent passive knowledge of Marra and speaks it well, although not fully fluently. It is unclear whether his near-fluency is attributable to having never fully acquired it or to rustiness through lack of use. Donald is a key traditional owner of an estate of Marra land called Nayirrinji, centred around the Towns River, just north of the Limmen River.

Donald was born in 1934 at the Old Mission, the son of Malachai, a Marra man and native speaker. Between the ages of 19 and 30 he visited ‘country’ for one to two months each year, travelling by canoe with members of his family and others from the Joshua and Riley families. They would pass through Nayirrinji and onto Limmen River where “we used to have a big camp there” (D. Blitner 1980: 51). In his later life, Donald spent many years away from the region, working on pastoral stations outside the region. He returned to Ngukurr late in life and appears to have been somewhat on the periphery of political and social life of the community since his return, possibly because of his lengthy absences.

\textsuperscript{35} The first time they came together as part of this study and I saw and heard Freda, Topsy and others use Marra exclusively and communicatively, I became quite emotional. I had worked with Marra speakers for a number of years but never heard it used as a language of casual communication among a small group. It brought tears to my eyes as a rare glimpse into decades past when the Marra language was in a much healthier state.
He has participated in occasional Marra recordings and reviewed some of the documentation work that has been done by others. Being outside the political core of Ngukurr, as well as a lack of experience in working on language projects, his involvement in this study was limited but still important.

Cherry Wulumirr Daniels was born in 1944 and her primary heritage language is Ngandi, however she has a good passive knowledge of Marra and is an excellent language worker, literate in multiple languages and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Arts in Education from Deakin University. In addition to a career in education, she led the local Indigenous ranger group for around 10 years until retiring in 2010. She participated occasionally in this study and has made valuable contributions.

She is part of the generation of mission-raised children who were punished for speaking traditional languages. She associates the missionaries’ actions with her inability to speak Ngandi with full fluency (see her contributions to the dialogues in examples (2.3) and (2.4) above). These experiences manifested in later years with Cherry and some of her peers determined to develop more locally-appropriate education, including language education and revitalisation (Daniels and Daniels 1991).

Regarding the significant population of Marra people in Borroloola, south of Ngukurr and Marra country, I have had fewer interactions with them, but it appears that no confident Marra speakers remain in Borroloola. I was able to visit several Marra elders in Borroloola who had one or two Marra-speaking parents and other caregivers and spent some or most of their childhood in the Limmen River area. It seems that while they had active knowledge of Marra decades ago, the ability to produce the language has since subsided. It appears that for Marra elders in the Borroloola area, their knowledge of Marra has diminished through (a) lack of use and (b) the secondary role the language plays to Yanyuwa in the language ecology of the town and environs. It is possible that their working knowledge of the language could be improved or retrieved through regular exposure to speakers and/or listening to recorded materials, but this remains to be seen.

2.5 1968–2000

In 1968, control of the Roper River Mission was officially handed over to government and it then became known as Ngukurr. At the same time, Aboriginal participation in the pastoral industry dropped considerably after legislation awarded Aboriginal workers

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36 Note that in Kriol, Ngukurr is still commonly referred to as Ropa (‘Roper’) – see Table 3–6.
equal pay with non-Aboriginal workers resulting in many losing employment. These events occurred against a backdrop of changing national policies that abandoned assimilationist policies in favour of self-determination. Just prior to this era, a 1967 national referendum resulted in Aboriginal people receiving full citizenship rights, including voting rights. This extended to other rights such as rights to pensions and unemployment benefits (for example) and while these changes can be viewed as positive developments, language shift and cultural change continued unabated. The impacts that previous decades of colonisation had brought were so significant and patterns of language shift and cultural change so entrenched that traditional languages declined further and lifestyles continued to move further away from those that existed prior to contact.

2.5.1 THE SELF-DETERMINATION ERA AND THE OUTSTATION MOVEMENT

The movement of this era that became known as self-determination “emphasised the importance of Indigenous Australians choosing ‘the degree to which, and the pace at which, they come to identify themselves with [Australian] society’” (former Prime Minister William McMahon in 1972, quoted in Edmonds 2007a: 78). A key aspect of self-determination for remote Aboriginal people was the outstation movement. This is when hundreds of remote Aboriginal people “started to actively reject the living conditions they had to endure in the artificial communities created by settlements, reserves and missions, and began campaigning for the right to return to their ancestral lands” (Kerins 2009: 1). It was a social movement that:

... constituted an Aboriginal rejection of the modernisation or development paradigm as experienced at government settlements and missions. The population movement was predicated on the rejuvenation of customary economic practices that many had assumed defunct. (Altman 2006: 5)

The outstation movement had a strong impact on the three communities that encircle Marra country: Numbulwar (formerly Rose River Mission), Borroloola and Ngukurr. Between the three communities around 25 outstations were created and supported. Government funding for basic infrastructure started in the 1970s (Taylor, Bern and Senior 2000: 19) and grew in subsequent years, delivering housing and essential services (power, water and waste treatment) as well as government education and health services in some places. This allowed family groups to again live permanently or semi-permanently on their traditional country. Across the region, hundreds of people did so. Taylor, Bern and Senior estimated that in the 1990s around 200 people were living on
the outstations administered from Ngukurr (ibid: 18), acknowledging that numbers would fluctuate seasonally.

This movement had some positive effects on the maintenance of Marra language, culture and social health, but in comparison with some language groups the impact upon Marra people and their country was comparatively less significant. Only one outstation, Wamunggu, was created on Marra land itself and only one other, Wiyagiba, became closely associated with Marra speakers and the maintenance of localised traditional practices associated with living in coastal environments. The history of these two outstations is described in further detail below.

Wamunggu outstation is also sometimes known by its Munanga name, Maria Lagoon. It is situated near the Limmen Bight River, the area that has been central to the maintenance of Marra language and culture since (at least) first contact with Munanga. Marra people like Ginger Riley led the development of the Wamunggu outstation in the 1960s or 1970s – some years after he and other Marra people had ceased a life of subsisting in the area. Having grown up in the vicinity of Wamunggu, Ginger – like others profiled above – wanted to move away from larger communities and return to country. Ginger Riley became a nationally acclaimed artist whose artist profile mentions that he “used to footwalk from the settlement [Borroloola] to Limmen Bight” (Ryan, Riley and National Gallery of Victoria 1997: 13). Riley’s recollection that “there were no houses, only humpies” (ibid: 13) accords with sources above stating that the outstation movement was a social movement. Infrastructure and government support followed, initially with the provision of basic shelters, developing further over the years with more sophisticated houses and infrastructure, including telecommunications and an airstrip. Riley and other Marra people from Borroloola lived at Wamunggu semi-permanently following its establishment. This allowed him and other Marra people to increase the degree to which they interacted with Marra country and engage in activities such as hunting and fishing and distance themselves from Munanga influences. The establishment of Wamunggu did not, however, result in a large-scale return to country on the part of Marra people, nor did it obviously result in any significant improvements in the vitality of the Marra language.

37 See for example Maureen Thompson incorporating Wamunggu and aspects of its creation story in the narrative discussed in detail in §7.1.1.
The other outstation important to Marra people is situated at Wiyagiba, on the coast north of the Roper River in an area belonging to the Warndarrang language and people. Wiyagiba is a traditional homeland of the now-elderly sisters referred to as the 'Wiyagiba mob' as mentioned in §2.4.5. Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi’s short narrative (see also Appendix 7) on her life includes details of her contribution to developing the outstation at Wiyagiba:

(2.10) *Gin.garra niwanji guda wayburri, nya-radburr-yurr na.*
We were living here (i.e. Numbulwar) and then we headed south, to (our) country.

*Gana n-gayarra nginarra gana... ngamburlma nana nanggaya n-nga-radburr nirrwi.*
I was there and I “thing”-ed the place of ours.

*Album-ngamindini nana gagamarr.*
I was helping your maternal grandfather (said to FR).

*Nawumburlana... ganarrinya, gana narriya murimuri nuwugi.*
Who was it... your father, (and) your grandfather.

*Nginarra nana nanggaya wumbul, ngamburlmarli, Wiyagiba, nginarra.*
It was me doing that whatchamacallit (establishing) at Wiyagiba, me.
Niwanjanji gayarra:::, jaw-jaw-wiliganj nana warlja.
We were living there (for a considerable time), we’d harpoon dugong.

Yundunyuga niwi-yarli, nana mindiwa, warugu
We’d eat sea turtle, saltwater mussels, (turtle) eggs...

Niwanjanji:::
We lived there (for a considerable time)...

Wala wilnya mingi gagamarr-wariya wala-rlini nirrwi-nyimbiyurr nana
niwi-rambi gayarra niwanjanji
Then your grandmothers, they came to us and we were all living there.

Guda, ngabar-ngabar-walamindini na.
But they’ve all passed away now.

For people in Ngukurr and Numbulwar, Wiyagiba more so than Wamunggu became the
nexus for the ongoing use of Marra language and traditional practices in the 1980s,
1990s and 2000s. The ‘Wiyagiba mob’ often used Nunggubuyu and Marra
communicatively while living there, reserving Kriol/Pidgin English for visiting younger
people who did not know either language. Even then they would frequently use Marra
with those who knew some and should be speaking it according to their lineage. This is
how a few people now in their 40s like Anthony Daniels acquired reasonable passive
knowledge of Marra. Yet, as with Wamunggu, there was no strong population movement
towards Wiyagiba, with younger Kriol speaking people generally only visiting for short
periods. As such, the effect that Wiyagiba had on the Marra language and culture
practices was, as with Wamunggu, only to slow rather than halt or reverse its decline.

The foundation of the outstation movement lay in land rights legislation that gave
Aboriginal people the ability to gain full title over their traditional lands. The Aboriginal
Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 provided Aboriginal people an opportunity to
claim full legal ownership of their land.38 While this was a positive development in many
ways, it has also been pointed out how it brought differences in Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal orientations to land into “open conflict” (Edmonds 2007a: 85). The Act did,
however, allow Marra people to claim and gain title and full veto rights over a significant

38 Note that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 pre-dates the more well-
known Mabo case of 1992 in which the High Court of Australia found that Terra Nullius never
existed and that Indigenous people did in fact have title over their land prior to colonisation. This
decision led to the creation of the Native Title Act 1993 which applied to the entire continent
rather than only the Northern Territory.
part of their traditional lands as a result of the Limmen Bight Land Claim in 1980 (shown on Map 1–1). Yet some Marra people were unhappy with the size and quality of land that was reclaimed. Bern and Larbalestier report that some claimants “were bitterly disappointed” as the land available for claim was “rubbish country” and omitted some key sites (1985: 60). Apart from the outstation at Wamunggu, Marra people have not greatly utilised or lived on the area covered by the Marra Land Trust.

The era of self-determination brought about other movements that put Aboriginal knowledge and values to the fore. Government education embraced the notion of Aboriginalisation in the 1970s, most obviously with the rollout of bilingual education programs. A formal bilingual education program was never introduced to Ngukurr school, but a contingent of local people (mostly L1 Kriol speakers but usually with some or good competency in one or more traditional languages) gained teaching qualifications ultimately leading to the Aboriginalisation of the local school. In the 1980s, Ngukurr’s school became the first in Australia in which every class was headed by a local Aboriginal teacher. As a result, the curriculum naturally became more localised and focused on local knowledge, going some way to reinforce the value of local language and culture (see, for example, Rogers 1991). By the 1990s, government and local dedication to the Aboriginalisation of education began to wane and access to teacher education for local people become harder, leading to a decline in the proportion of Aboriginal teachers at Ngukurr. Throughout this period, there was some inclusion of traditional languages like Marra in the school curriculum but this tended to be irregular and/or informal. No extensive or detailed formal Marra language program was developed or implemented.

2.5.2 LANGUAGE Ecology – Marra’s steady Decline and the Legitimising of Kriol

By 1968, all Marra people were living off Marra country in towns and communities where Marra was a minority language. We can assume that Marra was not being acquired by children as no-one who grew up in this era is a fluent Marra speaker. However, Marra speakers themselves may not have realised, or been ready to admit, that transmission was not occurring, indicated by the following claim made by Mack Riley to linguist Jeffrey Heath in the mid 1970s:
Young men and the young women, they speak English and they speak Marra, all of them, they don’t leave it behind (i.e. Marra).

Despite there being a sizeable number of fully fluent Marra speakers who used the language regularly when this era commenced, over the decades that followed Marra people and others who lived among them witnessed the slowly declining use of the language and numbers of fluent speakers. Over time, they inevitably came to accept the decline of the language. By 2001, a community language survey of Ngukurr and Minyerri found only twenty-three people who spoke and understood Marra, comprising less than 10% of all people who had some affiliation with the language (Lee and Dickson 2003: 42). All of those who reported that they spoke and understood Marra were over 45 years of age (ibid: 43). As mentioned above, outstations like Wiyagiba did provide for a micro-society where the communicative use of Marra was temporarily restored or prolonged, but this did not significantly affect the overall health of the language.

The decline of the Marra language was repeated at Borroloola. The Malandirri camp, adjacent to Borroloola, had until the start of this era “fostered communal life and the acquisition of traditional language” (Kirton 1988: 5). In 1969, it began to fragment. Deaths resulting from influenza led the Marra and Yanyuwa to set up scattered camps on the opposite, western side of the Macarthur River and the lifestyles that until that point had fostered the transfer of traditional language(s) changed.

Simultaneously, Kriol continued its geographic and demographic spread. At Numbulwar in the mid 1970s Heath found that “most people older than thirty (especially the women) had only a limited knowledge of English” and spoke Nunggubuyu as their dominant language. He noted that “most of the children speak Nunggubuyu but are also learning English” (Heath 1980b: 5). This shift continued to the point where by 2000, Numbulwar children’s L1 was a variety of Kriol closely related to that spoken at Ngukurr and the school’s bilingual education program was reshaped into a language revitalisation program (Nicholls 1994). More recently, linguists have claimed that Nunggubuyu has not been fully acquired since the 1950s, replaced by Kriol (e.g. Horrack 2010: 2).

\[ Note that Borroloola and Numbulwar were not included in the survey, however based on qualitative information it is likely the vitality of Marra in those locations would have similar characteristics to those found in Ngukurr and Minyerri. \]
Even preceding 1968, residents of the former mission had begun to recognise the communicative importance of Kriol (or pidgin, as it was then known). A missionary of the 1950s and 60s claims that it was normal for locals to request missionaries to learn ‘pidgin’: “It was generally always implied by the people that they would appreciate things being done in Kriol” (Leske in Sandefur 1985a: 215). The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) had been active in the Northern Territory since 1961, undertaking linguistic research and Bible translation in a number of remote communities. For example, Jean Kirton arrived in Borroloola in the 1960s focusing on establishing Yanyuwa as a liturgical language. When SIL incorporated Ngukurr into their scope in the 1970s, language shift away from traditional language was obvious and they instead focused on the creole language that was now widespread. Sandefur noted that “the Aboriginalisation of most of the major social institutions at Ngukurr in the 1970s have resulted, not in English being brought into the village, but in more Kriol being brought into the administrative domains of the settlement” (ibid: 216). The stage was set for the newly named language Kriol to become legitimised and move into new social and political domains.

In approaching the task of creating a vernacular Bible for creole speaking people of the Roper Region, SIL simultaneously described the language (see Sandefur 1979) and facilitated developments such as devising an orthography and training local people in literacy and translation. In the 1980s and beyond, a small team of people from Ngukurr were consistently working to translate the Bible into Kriol. Throughout the community and the greater region, there was a growing legitimisation of Kriol as a language recognised as having a distinctive rule-governed grammar, writing system and emerging literacy tradition. It was validated by its use in domains of formal education, religious prayer and local government and those who spoke it had less reason to devalue it.

Coinciding with the recognition of Kriol as a language in its own right, Marra people began increased efforts to revitalise their now critically endangered language. Despite the legitimisation of Kriol, traditional languages retained a higher degree of prestige (see, for example, Rhydwen 1996). In the 1980s Betty Roberts and some of her sisters undertook studies at the School of Australian Languages (see Black and Breen 2001). This led to further developments such as Marra people’s involvement in establishing and developing the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre in 1992 which delivered community language programs and resourcing for a large number of endangered languages throughout the region. While these efforts demonstrate a concern for the health of the Marra language and did serve to promote the language, the scale of these programs was insufficient to be able to reverse language shift. By the end of this era,
Marra was known to and used by only a handful of senior people while Kriol was a stable and accepted language of communication in every home in Ngukurr and throughout other communities of the region.

2.5.3 Marra People of This Period and Their Lives

This era marks the beginning of a period in which Marra people virtually ceased having regular contact with their own country although “some Mara [sic] continued to make regular visits to the Limmen Bight area until 1971” (Bern and Larbalestier 1985: 59). Bern and Larbalestier also describe how the population patterns at the start of this era meant that Marra people were politically “vulnerable... scattered as small minorities in three separate communities, none within their country” (1985: 59). As mentioned in §2.5.1, gaining legal rights over traditional land and the outstation movement did not result in large-scale trends of Marra people moving back to their country in significant number nor a significant renaissance of pre-contact cultural practices. By 2000, the lives of almost all Marra people were firmly entrenched in remote communities – towns of several hundred or more Indigenous people of mixed linguistic affiliations. These communities have a guise of an economically viable Western township but are home to majority Indigenous populations and are dependent on government services and funding for their existence.

While some aspects of the decline of the Marra language can be attributed to relatively typical processes of evolving lifestyles and population movements resulting from colonisation, the effect of policies preceding this era that explicitly limited the use of Aboriginal languages in the mission school continued to reverberate in subsequent decades. An attestation of the psychosocial scars that still affected adults years and decades later can be found in a commercial music recording by a local band, Yugul Band, in the lyrics of a song Across The River, assumedly written by singer Dan Thompson:

I didn’t speak our lingo [Ngandi]. We weren’t allowed at school. The white men got the idea we were abusing them. They couldn’t understand us, so they said you have to speak English, son. I find it better to communicate in English now. But to put both languages together would have been much better. I still feel that way, a strong feeling wishing to speak my lingo, my own language. My father was from the Wulngarri clan and my mother was from across the river. What my father want[ed] to see was for me to get a better education, from the whiteman. I don’t think he thought about teaching me the lingo. When he started to get old, he started saying he wished us youngfellas had learned our language. He wanted us to learn both ways – the whitefella way and the blackfella way. When I came back to Ngukurr, the only language was my mother’s [Marra]. Straight after 1968 I came back. I was around 14 years old. You lose your identity if you lose your
language. Your identity is connected to your land and your clan. And if your clan doesn’t have a language, then you feel like nothing. If you have a clan that has a language, then you are somebody. Being somebody is important. This is a story about the language I lost. (Across The River, Yugul Band 2004)

Thompson’s lyrics provide insight into the language situation for many or most of his generation. He mentions denigration and discrimination against traditional languages and the personal impact of language loss (“you feel like nothing”). He describes the desires of his parents for him to learn English and their subsequent regret at the outcome of this in the face of language loss. There is certainly a link between exogenic language discrimination and any endogenic push by parents towards English acquisition, although this is not made explicit in the passage above. Although Dan is referring to his father’s language, Ngandi, his insights are relevant to Marra as this was his mother Maureen Thompson’s language (profiled in §2.4.5.3) and because his experiences described below were paralleled among many or all of his contemporaries at Ngukurr, regardless of their primary language affiliation.

Others who made key contributions to this study include men like John Joshua who was reaching adulthood as this era began. His mother, Elsie Joshua, was an L1 Marra speaker and preferred to speak it rather than Kriol throughout her whole life. Yet John did not acquire fluency in Marra. Similarly, the children of Marra speakers Eva and Roger Rogers went on to all receive good Western educations and take up key positions and roles within Ngukurr community but they did not acquire Marra despite their parents both being fluent speakers. This suggests a significant rupture in transmission of Marra occurred in Ngukurr just prior to this era which meant that little transmission occurred throughout it. It appears as though the rupture can be attributed to (a) parents’ desires for their children to favour the acquisition of English over traditional languages (likely motivated by experiences of discrimination and black/white power imbalances) and/or (b) peer-driven motivations that aligned young people of this era as dynamic speakers of a quickly stabilising creole who simultaneously became the strongest English speakers their families had ever seen. This second factor is supported by evidence that “normal children accommodate rapidly and totally, or almost totally, to the speech of any new peer-group of which they become long term members” (Trudgill 2004: 35).

Ngukurr residents born in the 1970s and 1980s, including Marra people, have grown up living permanently in large, built-up communities like Ngukurr. They commonly experienced time away from the region while attending boarding school (usually in Darwin) and when outstations were viable many spent various amounts of time in those
smaller living areas. Yet knowledge of country began to attenuate and the role of place in identity was changing. The situation is analogous to that which Merlan encountered among Aboriginal people in Katherine at the time, where she found that:

... an earlier mode of conceiving landscape characterised by multiple centres, and practices anchoring person and Dreaming to such centres as points of subjective grounding became reorganised as a framework of places along settled travel routes and at sites of incipient development of a built environment. (Merlan 1998: 111)

Those who had the opportunity to spend time on outstations did learn aspects of traditional knowledge (see Chapter 7 for a description of young people's knowledge of traditional medicine). Some activities such as fishing and eating certain traditional foods (especially fruits) retain importance and popularity. This generation has participated in ceremonial life, including higher order ceremonies that were still held occasionally in the region, but their participation and knowledge of such things appears often to be reliant on the advice and mentoring of more senior people.

The development of communities like Ngukurr into a township with a Western guise meant that many people of this era had the opportunity to take up various vocations and participate in paid work in Western institutions. Common examples of such vocations include health workers, teachers and education assistants, mechanics and builders, administrative jobs and other community workers. These jobs formed increasingly important parts of the identity of many community residents although many others became increasingly dependent on government welfare, housing and other services for day-to-day living. As the daily, weekly and annual cycles of Western-style work practices became increasingly normalised, less and less opportunity was available to Marra people to maintain cultural practices and learn their language of heritage they had not acquired as an infant.

Anthony Daniels is probably the most anomalous case in terms of acquiring Marra language. Born in the late 1960s, his mother is a good Marra speaker but does not use it regularly and her primary language is Ngandi. Anthony became a health worker and spent many years working alongside senior health worker Freda Roberts at the Ngukurr Clinic, also a L1 Marra speaker (see §2.4.5.1). This gave him a greater exposure to the language than many of his contemporaries and it likely also helped that Mrs. Roberts was a well-respected community member, thereby demonstrating that being a Marra speaker was compatible with good social standing in Aboriginal and Western domains. In his adult life, Anthony also spent extended periods of time at Wiyagiba outstation where the
'Wiyagiba mob' used Marra and Nunggubuyu communicatively and used those languages regularly with Anthony. Anthony's own interest in traditional language and culture, aptitude for language learning, and fondness for Marra speakers such as Freda and the Wiyagiba mob meant that he was content to devote time to language learning and living at Wiyagiba. Today, Anthony's Marra vocabulary is quite sizeable and his passive knowledge is quite good. He can produce basic sentences and can read and write Marra well. For someone his age, this level of knowledge of and interest in Marra is certainly the exception rather than the rule.

Men like Anthony, John and Dan discussed above remain active members of Ngukurr community and their stories are relevant also to contemporary life and lifestyles in Ngukurr today, discussed in further detail in the next section. Section 2.6 however focuses on younger generations – those who reached adulthood in the new millennium.

2.6 LIFE IN NGUKURR NOW – BEING MARRA, SPEAKING KRIOL

In the 21st century, the only Indigenous people living on the traditional land of Marra people and language are a small family who operate the Limmen Bight Fishing Camp (see Map 1–1) on the banks of the Limmen River approximately halfway between the coast and the unpaved seasonal road between Roper Bar and Borroloola. They operate a tourism business that attracts recreational fishers and some of the more adventurous tourists for the few months of the year when such travel is possible and the weather is comfortable. The camp is only a few kilometres downstream from the Wamunggu outstation and billabong (see §2.5.1) and also not far from where John Costello would have set up the Valley of Springs homestead in the 1880s.

The vast majority of Marra people’s lives in this century firmly revolve around remote towns and communities with mixed populations of Aboriginal people from a variety of sociolinguistic heritages but where English and Kriol are the dominant languages. This has created a contemporary situation where young people’s identity is increasingly determined by affiliations with these newer locations rather than with traditional estates or sociolinguistic identities. Map 1–1 (see page 3) reflects the present geography of the region where population is centred on towns such as Numbulwar, Borroloola, Ngukurr and Minyerri. Marra country itself is now partly incorporated into the Limmen Bight National Park with the remainder enduring as Aboriginal land as the Marra Land Trust. In 2013, a major Iron Ore mine began operating, established by Western Desert Resources and this also impacted upon inland portions of Marra land and waterways such as the Towns River. Map 1–1 also shows the contemporary language situation:
original Aboriginal languages of the region are not listed if they are no longer a significant part of the region’s contemporary linguistic ecology whereas widely spoken varieties of Kriol (Barunga Kriol and Roper Kriol) are identified instead.

Life for Marra people in communities like Ngukurr, Numbulwar and Borroloola has obvious resemblances to life in non-Indigenous parts of rural Australia. Each have established government-funded institutions like health clinics with qualified doctors, schools staffed by professional teachers, municipal services like rubbish collection, power and sewerage. Residents have access to more than one shop from which they can obtain all food and household supplies they require. Mobile phones and smartphones are omnipresent and social media use among young people is high. Commercially constructed houses are usually equipped with television and air-conditioning. Most people are fanatical about football and almost all residents ascribe to Christianity to some degree.

Yet core differences belie the Western familiarities. Households are home to much larger numbers of people. Nuclear families rarely exist but rather intergenerational households of often three to four generations are the norm. Kinship networks retain primacy in social interactions and this is reflected in language use, as discussed in Chapter 5 below. Despite an increasingly dominant work-centric timetable, work practices are distinctive and centred on maintaining kinship roles rather than goal-oriented Western ideals relating to economic and vocation success (McRae-Williams and Gerritsen 2010). Kriol is very much the dominant language of social interaction and the language of choice of jokes, arguments and gossip. Yet evidence of multilingual practices rooted in pre-contact times persists, albeit in different forms. To some extent, it is revealed via significant non-English based influences on the Kriol lexicon, as described in Chapters 3 and 4. More so, it is demonstrated in code-switching that is unfamiliar to average L1 English speaking Australians. Whether it is a young person switching between English and Kriol or older residents incorporating words and phrases from a traditional language into their speech, this type of language play common in multilingual societies, including Aboriginal societies (e.g. McConvell and Meakins 2005: 18–19), is still part of the average Kriol speaker’s repertoire.

The sociolinguistic situation in Ngukurr today and lifestyles of Kriol speakers is exemplified further throughout the remaining chapters via discussion and data (see for example §3.1). The occurrence of certain non-English verbs presented in Chapter 4 discusses verbs that are linked to cultural practices still omnipresent today. To take just a
few examples, *ngaja* 'ask for something' relates to cultural practices of "demand-sharing" (see Peterson 1993), *ngarra* 'peep' retains currency at least in part because of the maintenance of kin-based avoidance strategies while the delousing encoded by the verb *di* may be familiar to non-Indigenous people but is an activity with distinctive social significance for Aboriginal people (see Trigger 1981). In other parts of the thesis, I assess contemporary knowledge and uses of bush medicine (Chapters 6 and 7) while Chapter 5, which focuses on kinship, provides further examples of contemporary cultural practices such as the use of kinship-based politeness strategies. As a final point of discussion in this chapter however, the following section discusses identity construction among young adult Kriol speakers and the role of traditional languages like Marra in contemporary social identities.

### 2.6.1 The Last Years of Marra as a Fully-Spoken Language: Contemporary Uses and Functions in Identity Construction

Life in Ngukurr allows young residents to construct their social identity along a variety of complex vectors, not all of which were available to previous generations. Based on my own observations on the way Kriol speakers in Ngukurr construct their identity, the strongest factors are family (including ancestry) and geography. ‘Family’ relates to consanguineal, affinal and classificatory kin relationships. Everyone in Ngukurr occupies a unique node in a complex network of such relationships and draws on this to build social identity. This manifests itself linguistically in commonly occurring cultural scripts that allow individuals to clarify and negotiate kin relationships. (See Nicholls (2013) for cultural scripts used by Roper Kriol speakers to achieve person reference.) Crucial and basic information-seeking questions along this theme are common and rudimentary among Kriol speakers e.g. asking *wani yu gulu mi?* ‘what kin relationship are you and I in?’, *wani yu gulu im?* ‘what kin relationship are you in with s/he?’ etc. An overarching source of kinship-based social identity is being aligned with an extended family group, usually named according to a common surname. This binds young people to apical ancestors and their other descendants, which carries importance not only among young people but among senior people who knew those ancestors and contemporarily maintain authority through the maintenance of gerontocratic social structures.

As mentioned in §2.6, attachment to a community such as Ngukurr appears to also be a significant identity marker and has become a more meaningful component of young people’s social identity than membership to a sociolinguistic group. Other components of social geography are also prominent in constructing social identity (see Nicholls 2013: 293). This may include traditional homeland(s) or estates with which individuals have
ownership or guardianship roles over (e.g. “my country is X”), domiciles at micro and macro levels (e.g. “Ngukurr” or “top camp”, “Silver city”, “Rainbow street” etc.) as well as locations where individuals have travelled to, spent time at or had experiences at. For example, some of the young people in their 20s who assisted with this study articulate the value in experiences such as:

- spending extended periods of time in other locations where other close relatives live e.g. Groote Eylandt, Numbulwar
- attending high school in Darwin
- visiting or living in large state capitals for a period of time
- being a traditional owner over a particular estate on their language group’s territory

Other areas, in no particular order, which contribute to young Kriol speakers’ identity include:

- vocation, workplace and education (level and location)
- cultural competencies – “western” and “traditional”
- religion, in particular, adherence to Christianity-based beliefs and practices
- knowledge of, and participation in, traditional ceremonies
- leisure activities, and competency in participating in them, including: fishing/hunting, sport (football for men, basketball for women), drinking and socialising with outsiders

This reflects gradual changes over time in the way Marra people construct their social identity. It also reflects changes relating to Kriol becoming the dominant language and traditional sociolinguistic identities have become less prominent. Yet today’s young Kriol-speaking residents of Ngukurr do factor their linguistic ancestry into the construction of their identity, despite most young people often having little exposure to or knowledge of the traditional languages of their direct ancestors. The enduring link between linguistic heritage and identity is probably attributable to the strong links between land and language that exist in the region (see Merlan 1981). In fact, it is likely that Kriol speakers place greater emphasis upon connections to traditional land to construct their identity, rather than language itself. However, because land and language are fundamentally inseparable, language-related components of identity endure as long as land-related components do. Merlan found a similar pattern among Aboriginal people in Katherine whose socio-territorial identity and affiliation with a traditional language was retained while interaction with and knowledge of country was reducing:
...such identity was grounded in a stretch of country, more or less known or knowable, and that this gave the identification an inherent and practical "ground". (Merlan 1998: 121)

Similarly to what Merlan found, there is evidence that traditional linguistic heritage, or socio-territorial identity, does occupy a place in shaping young people’s identity and experience. With the ubiquitous use of mobile phones from the mid 2000s onwards, plus the advent of smart phones and popularity of Facebook that coincided with the timing of this study, it is possible to gain indicators of young people’s attitudes and experiences through their use of social media (most commonly, Facebook). In 2012, I posted a link on Facebook to a UNESCO website about International Mother Language Day (February 21). The caption to the link featured my attempt at writing in Marra and Kriol: “Today has been named "Mother Language" day. So speak your language!”:

![Facebook post with Kriol comment conveying positive attitude towards Marra](6/11/2012)

The comment in response was by a male Ngukurr resident, in his 30s, who grew up with his Marra speaking abuji ‘grandmother’ (now deceased). He ‘liked’ the link and commented in Kriol:

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40 Readers familiar with Facebook may note that Facebook images used in this thesis show much of the interface translated into Kriol. This results from the author’s contribution to an international project to make Facebook available in endangered and minority languages (see Scannell 2012).

41 The use of the imperative in this example suits the pragmatics of Aboriginal languages and is not as "bossy" the English translation might seem.
This translates roughly as ‘Goodness my grandmother’s language. Well, it’s really great’. Months later, his younger sister (in her mid-20s) was having a general discussion on Facebook with her (classificatory) sister and good friend (in her early 20s) when they fondly recalled their attempts to learn Marra from their father:

The relevant comment appears in the third reply, as part of the second adjacency pair, in which the younger sister says:

(2.11) *Uy haha I been just talkin ba u today ba talk talk gotta Marra geen. Sabi wen u always askey daddy.*

The 4th and 5th comments are an off-topic, adjacency pair initiated by a 3rd party and have hence been concealed. The reply to the comment mentioning Marra occurs as the 6th comment: *bala ngi hahaha*. This adjacency pair is rewritten in standard Kriol orthography and translated below:

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42 Standard Kriol spelling would render this comment as "Gardi bla main abuji langgus wal gudwei wan na".
In Borroloola, a small but significant portion of the Aboriginal population still identify as Marra but it can be assumed that the language is no longer heard and has not been for some years. My own interactions with Borroloola residents have only been brief, but indications are that a number of elders have some, or even a lot, of passive knowledge but few, if anyone, self-identifies as a Marra speaker. Yet the language remains part of the community’s heritage and history there too. In 2010, John Bradley talked about the Marra language with some senior Yanyuwa speakers. They told him that they “could understand some of it, but it also made them quite emotional”. He goes on to relay a comment from a senior Yanyuwa woman who said:

...when you don’t hear the language anymore you lose it”, she used a Yanyuwa word jabumantharra which means to break open, so she was saying she could no longer break open Marra, even though her father had been a fluent speaker and she could once understand. (John Bradley, pers. comm., June 24 2010)

Kriol-speaking Marra people today understand that their language is part of their heritage and identity, but it appears to have lost primacy in shaping identity. In Ngukurr today, the language is essentially no longer heard, no longer used and interactions with Marra country are infrequent. In Ngukurr, until about a decade ago, Christian songs translated into Marra were commonly sung at regular church services. This represented one of the main ways in which significant numbers of people would hear and use Marra. This practice has also subsided in recent years with church-goers increasingly preferring to use recorded, commercial Christian music during services. A handful of young Marra people have had some involvement in Marra documentation and revitalisation activities and may incorporate a handful of learned nouns and turns-of-phrase on occasion, but there is no evidence that these practices are diffusing throughout the community.

Nevertheless, Marra retains a greater role in the Kriol spoken by young people in Ngukurr than they themselves realise, as is revealed in Chapters 3 and 4. A significant number of high frequency Kriol lexemes in almost all word classes have been borrowed
from Marra or from cognates in neighbouring languages. Young Kriol speakers are largely unaware that a not-insignificant portion of their vocabulary is derived from Marra, although there are signs of awareness of this slowly increasing thanks to the findings of the present study and the work of the Ngukurr Language Centre. There is some scope for the Marra language to form an increasingly important part of young Kriol speakers’ identity if their knowledge of the etymology of their lexicon increases through education.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a chronology of the lives of Marra people from before contact with Munanga until the present day, recounting historical events and the social and political contexts in which they occurred and also providing ethnographic and biographic information. An indication of pre-contact life was given and historical evidence suggests that some Marra people continued living similar lives right up until the 1940s. Other Marra people were significantly affected after Munanga started to interact with them, including violence and killings associated with the pastoral industry. The missions and towns that emerged following the expansion of the pastoral industry fostered the emergence of Kriol, particularly at the Roper River Mission. This, combined with historical treatment of traditional languages like Marra ranging from benign neglect to explicit denigration, served to create a prime environment for language shift. Kriol has been the primary language of communication for several generations of Marra people and a number of those who have lived through this language shift were profiled and were involved in this study. A description was also provided of the contemporary situation in Ngukurr, where Kriol speakers have little or no interactions with Marra as an independent language system.

This historical and ethnographic survey serves to embed the remainder of the thesis – which pays closer attention to linguistic data and analysis – in historical and social context. The following chapter broadly discusses the lexical impact that Marra has had on contemporary Kriol, which has previously been under-described. This theme continues through to Chapter 4 which more closely analyses specific sets of common non-English based verbs used by Kriol speakers, many of which were also previously undescribed.
3 Substrate lexical influences on Kriol

John Sandefur, one of the first linguists to have researched Kriol, found that:

The influence of individual traditional languages on Kriol is most readily observable in the Kriol lexicon. (Sandefur 1985b: 210)

And that:

One of the most significant factors contributing to dialect differences in Kriol is the traditional Aboriginal language environment. (Sandefur 1985b: 210)

At the commencement of this study in 2010, almost everyone who affiliated with the Marra language spoke Kriol – or more specifically, the Roper dialect of Kriol – as a first language and used it as a lingua franca. Sandefur’s extensive research on Kriol focused primarily on this variety also. He comments further on substrate lexical influence:

For example, manuga ‘money’ (from ‘stone’) was borrowed from one of the languages around Ngukurr. It is commonly used at Ngukurr, and known by Kriol speakers in the communities immediately surrounding Ngukurr, but it is virtually unknown by Kriol speakers elsewhere. Some language borrowed words, however, have become regionalised. Gajinga ‘damn it’ (originally a reference to the genitals) is also from a local Ngukurr traditional language, but it is now used by Kriol speakers throughout the Roper River and Bamyili areas. (Sandefur 1985b: 210–211)

In these short quotes, Sandefur identifies the following:

- Traditional languages make a salient contribution to Kriol lexicon(s)
- This in turn contributes to geographic variation across Kriol dialects
- Substrate lexemes may be localised, others may undergo diffusion into neighbouring varieties
- Semantic shift and/or pragmatic differences may occur when lexemes are borrowed or transfer into Kriol.

Yet, substrate lexical influence on Kriol, especially Roper River Kriol, has remained an under-researched area. Using the above as an example, Sandefur mentions a localised Kriol word, manuga ‘money’, “borrowed from one of the languages around Ngukurr”, but does not note the language of origin. Manuga is in fact a Marra word and this example

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43 In other languages of Ngukurr manuga ‘stone/money’ occurs as gudaru (Alawa), gu-jundu (Ngandi), gu-birn (Ngalakgan), nuga (Nuggubuyu), noka’ (Ritharrŋu) and in Warndarrang, Heath (1980a) gives three forms, including manuga (the other two being ligarr and marligarr).
foreshadows findings presented below arguing that Marra is Kriol’s most influential substrate in relation to lexical influence.

Exploring substrate lexical influence on creoles can improve understandings of processes of language change and language shift, and also understandings of cultural loss and continuity. For example, we can consider the semantics and semantic categories of substrate-derived nominals or consider events categorised by substrate verbs and discuss what underlying cultural continuities they may provide evidence for. New information on substrate lexical influences presented in this thesis can also inform creolistics and contact language research and further our understanding of their development. This chapter does not directly investigate how substrate languages like Marra may have influenced the syntax or morphology of Kriol. For example, I do not directly revisit the application of the Transfer Constraints approach (Siegel 2008) (discussed further below), which has previously been applied to Roper Kriol (Munro 2004; 2011). However, this chapter does begin to build a new and more accurate assessment of substrate lexical influences found in Roper Kriol which can potentially contribute to and improve these analyses.

Current and recent language ecologies of Kriol are summarised in §3.1. Section 3.2 discusses previous research relating to substrate lexical influences in a range of creoles and mixed languages. The methodology used to investigate substrate lexical influence on Kriol is discussed in §3.3. Then §3.4 surveys major word classes in Kriol and the non-English lexemes occurring in each of them, revealing that Kriol speakers use more non-English based lexemes than previously recognised. Section 3.5 provides some preliminary quantitative data on the frequency of non-English based lexemes and further information such as variation in the use of those lexemes in relation to factors such as age and geography.

Some key domains are not discussed in this chapter but rather held over to subsequent chapters where they are considered in greater detail. In particular, Chapter 4 considers several dozen non-English based verbs occurring in Kriol, many of which were previously undocumented outside their source languages. Chapter 5 considers kin terminology and person reference while Chapter 7 discusses ethnobiological knowledge among Kriol speakers, in particular, bush medicine and lizard taxa.

3.1 LANGUAGE ECOCOLGY OF KRIOL AND ITS CREOLISATION

At the time of invasion, Marra people occupied their traditional lands bounded by the Gulf of Carpentaria coast and the territories of Warndarrang (north), Alawa (west) and
Yanyuwa (south-east) people (see Map 2–1). Multilingualism was the norm in the region, which was likely enhanced by the cultural value placed on mobility, including outside of home territories, and by ceremonies sometimes held for extended periods which saw large numbers of people from many language groups converging for the occasion. As one of my community research partners wrote,

... old men at Ngukurr also gave evidence that virtually everybody in the old days was multilingual but mainly spoke the languages of neighbouring groups and those with whom they had strong cultural links. (Joshua 2004: 17).

This linguistic ecology has almost disappeared. Every generation of people who grew up in Ngukurr, or its antecedent the Roper River Mission, acquired Kriol as a first language and did so in environments where traditional languages were becoming less and less prevalent. In the contemporary language ecology, especially that of younger adults and children, traditional languages are not frequently heard or used, at least in Ngukurr. As a result, innovations that young Kriol speakers make in their language are based primarily upon Kriol input (i.e. parental generations and older are all speaking Kriol too). This is a new situation. Older generations in Ngukurr acquired and altered their variety of Kriol in a more multilingual environment than is found today in Ngukurr, with considerably more contact with substrate languages. In effect, the 'anchor' of traditional language input has been raised and young generations of Kriol speakers in Ngukurr are sailing freely, innovating almost exclusively by drawing upon the Kriol of previous generations and omnipresent English.

As mentioned previously, this new linguistic ecology for Kriol is not providing evidence of decreolisation. Yet there is evidence that intergenerational language change is occurring. Interestingly, as identified in §1.5.3, language change in Kriol is not always in a direction that leads to forms becoming more similar to English, even if they are originally derived from English forms. For example, bilabial sounds in word-final position are regularly dropped, rendering words that may be familiar to English speakers as unfamiliar. Other sound changes are also attested that render English-derived words as less recognisable, examples of which are given below:
In line with the lack of evidence of decreolisation, it is also not clear that non-English based lexemes are a less significant feature of Kriol today than among previous generations when Kriol speakers had significantly more contact with traditional languages or had competencies in traditional languages. Although some lexemes are becoming obsolete to younger Kriol speakers (see e.g. §3.5.1), it is interesting to note that a large number of non-English terms continue to have currency in Roper Kriol. This study has found at least 200 lexemes, not including proper names, that are known to most or all Kriol speakers. Furthermore, given the contemporary language ecology of Ngukurr, young speakers use many of these lexemes with little or no metalinguistic awareness that they are derived from traditional languages, let alone knowing what the particular language(s) of origin might be. Notably, at least half are found in Marra (and usually shared with other traditional languages), despite most Kriol speakers having little or no interaction with Marra as an autonomous language system.

As already mentioned, the extent of the lexical contributions that substrate languages, in particular Marra, have made to the lexicon of Kriol has to date been underestimated and not fully described. In the following section I discuss previous work that mentions substrate languages of Kriol and argue that substrate influences could be described in a more nuanced and evidence-based manner.

### 3.2 Previous Research

#### 3.2.1 Substrate Influences on Creole Lexicons

Major factors that contribute to lexical material transferring into creoles include the degree of contact, the boundedness of the material and the level of structural congruence between the two languages in relation to a specific category (Meakins and O'Shannessy 2012). The structural factors of boundedness and congruence have contributed to “various borrowing hierarchies [that] place nouns and inflectional morphology at either end of a scale” (ibid: 219). This is reflected in studies of creole lexicons which consistently found that lexical influence (also referred to as borrowing or transfer) from substrate languages commonly occurs in nominal word classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Etymon</th>
<th>Classic Kriol</th>
<th>Contemporary Kriol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>climb up</td>
<td>galimap</td>
<td>galima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you mob</td>
<td>yumob</td>
<td>yuma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here</td>
<td>iya</td>
<td>ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there</td>
<td>jeya</td>
<td>ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that one</td>
<td>tharran</td>
<td>than</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3–1: Example Kriol lexemes demonstrating phonological change divergent from English etymons*
A further factor that may contribute to the transfer of lexical material into creoles is semantic domain. Descriptions of creoles often identify specific semantic domains where substrates are more likely to contribute lexical material to creole lexicons. Section 1.2.4 provided a brief overview of some previous studies of creoles that have characterised lexical influences of substrate languages on various creoles in terms of semantic domain. Observations of Caribbean creoles show that words of African origin are borrowed into domains "generally described as private" and that European-derived words occur in "public" domains (Alleyne 1971: 176). Holm posited that substrate lexemes in Caribbean creoles occur in the following domains: "sexuality, religion or other African cultural survivals" (Holm 2000: 116). More recently, Farquharson (2012) reanalysed Africanisms in Jamaican creole, establishing African etymologies for 289 lexemes. His categorisation of the lexemes again leans towards the prevalence of nominals, with only 10% of the words occurring in word classes other than noun or adjective (22 verbs, four interjections and three adverbs). Semantic categories most represented were food and drink (17.3%) and descriptor (13.5%) followed by fauna (9.7%), material culture (9.3%) and people (8.9%).

Outside of the Caribbean, Nordhoff's (2009) study of Sri Lanka Malay appears to note very little lexical material from Tamil and the examples that are noted are generally found in nominal classes. In Melanesia, Mühlhäusler's study of the lexicon of New Guinea Pidgin found that "lexical items of local origin are not equally represented in all semantic areas, but are found primarily in... names of animals, names for plants (and) cultural items and concepts" (Mühlhäusler 1979: 196–197). Keesing's (1988) study of the neighbouring Solomons Pijin did not comment on non-English derived lexical forms, possibly because the Kwaio people he worked with were bilingual and maintaining a lexical dichotomy between the two languages.

In older creoles like those of the Caribbean, assessing substrate influence has needed to carefully account for time gradations to determine which substrates were relevant during creolisation (e.g. Arends, Kouwenberg and Smith 1994, Farquharson 2012). This is less relevant in the case of Kriol as the history of its creolisation is well-documented (Harris 1986) with only minor points of disagreement among scholars (these are discussed in §3.2.2 below).

In the broader Australian context, Hudson comments upon Walmajarri words that transferred into Fitzroy Valley Kriol. She identifies only five words “where my language teacher could give no English derived Kriol word as an equivalent” (Hudson 1983: 132):
two nouns and three exclamations. Hudson regards borrowed Walmajarri coverbs separately as they are not direct borrowing but instead represent a morpheme borrowed from Walmajarri verb complexes into Kriol and given "full verbal status" (ibid: 133). Hudson says this occurs “often” in Fitzroy Valley Kriol and is done so “to express a fine point of meaning when a suitable Kriol word eludes the speaker” (ibid: 133). This feature of Fitzroy Valley Kriol closely corresponds to the borrowing of Marra coverbs into Roper River Kriol, discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Other relevant Australian studies discuss mixed languages or traditional Aboriginal language systems undergoing change. Langlois (2004) investigated English loans in young people's Pitjantjatjara. She investigated which semantic domains were more susceptible to adopting English loans and found a high degree of variability. Pitjantjatjara lexemes were most robust in domains like body parts, directions and flora, in which virtually no English loans occurred. A small number of English loans were used in domains such as fauna, physical qualities, actions and environment. Over a third of the terms tested in the domains of material culture, human classification and quantity were English loans, while four out of five colour terms tested were borrowed from English (Langlois 2004: 132–133).

Mixed languages like Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri have developed in environments with intense contact between the contributing languages. This has led to lexical and grammatical features from both languages featuring substantially in the new language. The mixed languages feature a high degree of borrowing from the corresponding traditional languages, including case marking and other morphological features that rarely transfer into creoles. Meakins and O'Shannessy found that the relatively unbounded nature of Gurindji coverbs has led to a high level of borrowing in verbs where a third of Gurindji Kriol verbs are borrowed from the open class of Gurindji coverbs (Meakins and O'Shannessy 2012). This significant degree of borrowing in verbs is atypical of creoles, but it is a finding that is relevant to Roper Kriol due to several dozen verbs that are derived from coverbs occurring (mostly) in Marra and Alawa.

Of course, it should be noted that where lexical material occurs in creoles with the same form and meaning as is found in substrates, it cannot be necessarily claimed that those substrates also have influence over grammatical aspects of the creole. For example, in Surinamese creoles, the Bantu language Kikongo of central Africa is reported to have made a lexical contribution equal to that made by west African languages like Fon, yet it is the Gbe language family (including Fon) of west Africa that appears to have influenced
the syntax of Surinamese creoles, rather than Kikongo (Arends, Kouwenberg and Smith 1994: 106–108). As such, the lexical contributions to Kriol made by substrate languages like Marra discussed below should not be assumed to indicate substrate influence in other aspects such as syntax.

3.2.2 SUBSTRATE INFLUENCES ON ROPER RIVER KRIOL

Research that has a geographic focus on the Roper River Region and Ngukurr commonly mentions the original languages of the region whenever the demography of the local population is discussed. For example, a late 1990s socio-economic study of Ngukurr states that in the 1950s and 1960s seven major language groups were represented at the Roper River Mission: Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngalakgan, Ngandi, and Nunggubuyu (Taylor, Bern and Senior 2000: 15). This is a familiar refrain; another example is Edmonds’ anthropology PhD thesis (2007a) which references Harris’ historical account of missionary activity (1998) describing the demography of the early days of the Roper River Mission:

... over two hundred people had gathered at the mission. They were the remnants of the Mara, Warndarang, Alawa, Ngalakan and Ngandi tribes, the southernmost members of the Rembarrnga and Nunggubuyu tribes and some of the western members of the Mangarayi tribe.44 (ibid: 11)

This common description is, however, a potential source of confusion when considering substrate influence because in the Roper River Region, socio-territorial identification is commonly done by using a language name, reflecting the link between land, language and social identity traditionally found in the area (Merlan 1981). This link explains why it is not unusual to arrive at statements like those given above. However, confusion may occur because, despite referencing languages, such statements are not describing linguistic ecology but rather relaying the socio-territorial identifications within the population. A further example is Sandefur’s summary of the “languages represented at Ngukurr” which conflates socio-territorial identification with language ecology:

Today there are nine major traditional languages represented at Ngukurr (Mara, Wandarang, Alawa, Manggarai, Ngandi, Ngalakan, Nunggubuyu, Rembarrnga and Ritharrngu). (Sandefur 1985a: 208, Sandefur’s spellings)

A further issue with previous research on Kriol relates to the timing of the important work of John Harris, who carefully investigated the development of Roper River Kriol. His

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44 This statement was discussed in §2.3.2 in relation to the false suggestion that Marra people were no longer living on country.
work was carried out when Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (see, for example, Bickerton 1984) was at its most influential and theories relating to Universal Grammar were dominant in linguistics. The concept of language universals gained much currency in creole studies through Bickerton’s work which argues that creolisation processes rely on children accessing Universal Grammar. These ideas see substrate languages and their influences as having little or no role in creolisation processes. When Harris carefully studied the genesis of Kriol (1986), the influence of Bickerton’s work may have contributed to Harris not assessing substrate influences in detail. He did discuss substrate influence briefly (ibid: 298–300) and predicted that “Aboriginal terms for some biological phenomena or for kinship terms would become an essential part of the language”, characterised by “concepts for which an English term or circumlocution is not available” (ibid: 299). Overall, however, substrate languages were of little significance to Harris’ characterisation of the development of Kriol.

Similarly, Sandefur’s landmark grammatical description of Kriol (1979) pays little attention to the issue of substrate lexical influence despite including a number of examples that feature non-English based lexemes. His later research makes general reference to substrate lexical influence (see the quotes introducing this chapter) and he is critical of Bickerton’s work (Sandefur 1985b) but he did not investigate substrate influences in detail.

Bickerton’s theories have been subsequently challenged and disputed, and it is widely accepted that substrate languages have influenced Kriol. More recent studies such as Nicholls (2009) acknowledge and describe substrate languages and identify typological differences:

The substrate languages of Kriol can be divided into two families based on typological similarities and genetic descent; Ngakaman, Nunggubuyu and Ngandi are Gunwinyguan languages. Marra and Warndarrang are Marran languages; Alawa is typologically similar to the Marra languages. There is disagreement as to which family the Mangarrayi language belongs. (Nicholls 2009: 9)

But it is still uncommon for research on Kriol to carefully consider the following questions individually:

a. What is and was the linguistic ecology of Ngukurr or the Roper River Mission?

b. Which substrate languages influence Kriol and to what degree?

Munro (2004; 2011) was the first and, to date, only researcher to systematically survey substrate influences on Roper Kriol. Her analysis uses the Transfer Constraints approach
(Siegel 1999; 2008) which predicts the structural features of creoles based on features transferring from substrate languages given appropriate conditions, such as salience, congruence and frequency of substrate features. In using the Transfer Constraints approach, Munro’s analysis of substrate influence focuses on grammatical functions, examining features such as pronouns, TAM marking and case marking. In setting the foundation for her analysis, Munro, like other researchers, identifies a familiar group of substrates relevant to the development of Kriol:

The substrate languages of Roper Kriol are those of the Indigenous language groups that maintain custodial relationship to their land, also known as country, in the Roper River region: Alawa, Marra, Ngalkgan, Warndarrang, Mangarrayi, Ngandi and Nunggubuyu. (Munro 2004: 4)

Munro makes some attempt to assess various degrees of influence among substrates and ultimately eliminates some languages from her application of the Transfer Constraints approach:

Neither Warndarrang nor Ngandi are included in the comparative analyses in chapters 3-6, primarily because Warndarrang shares many typological features with Marra, and Ngandi is closely related to Nunggubuyu (see e.g. Heath 1978a). The low numbers of Warndarrang and Ngandi speakers also implies that these groups had minimal impact on language contact. (Munro 2004: 9)

The above quote sees Munro combine typological factors with ecological factors to discount Warndarrang and Ngandi as significantly influential. With Munro’s work being the only major survey to date of substrate influence in Roper Kriol, I examine the characterisation of the influential languages in some detail.

Ngandi was not included in the group of languages that Munro used when applying Siegel’s Transfer Constraints approach “primarily because … Ngandi is closely related to Nunggubuyu” (Munro 2004: 9). Heath does indeed state that “Ngandi and Nunggubuyu are closely related” (Heath 1978a: 4) but also goes on to say that “it would be misleading to exaggerate their genetic proximity” (ibid: 5). He points out examples such as verbal suffixes which, although obviously cognate, carry out different grammatical functions and that “a great many high-frequency stems (nouns, verbs, etc.) are in fact not cognate … “ (ibid: 5). Warndarrang was similarly excluded on typological grounds as it “shares many typological features with Marra” (Munro 2004: 9). Since Munro’s work however, Harvey (2012) has argued that the relationship between Marra and Warndarrang is predominantly lexical and attributable to borrowing. He claims that there is insufficient evidence to place them in the same family. Heath had placed them in the same family but
did note that they "are rather divergent from each other", pointing out that it is difficult to reconstruct much of the morphology of Proto-Warndarrang-Marra-Alawa (1978a: 7).

Munro also considered demography and linguistic ecology in determining likely substrate influence. Munro is correct in saying that the languages excluded from her study, Ngandi and Warndarrang, had low numbers of speakers compared to other substrates. Warndarrang is the weakest of the original languages of the region and has not been fully spoken since the 1970s. Ngandi is noticeably more viable than Warndarrang, although also weak. Yet Ngandi is in a similar situation to Ngalakgan, which Munro did include in the pool of influential substrates, suggesting inconsistency in selecting one over the other. Both Ngandi and Ngalakgan were spoken by small numbers of people until the last fully fluent speakers passed away in the 2000s. A 2001 language census found both languages in comparable states of endangerment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speak &amp; Understand</th>
<th>Ngalakgan</th>
<th>Ngandi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand but speak a little</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of people surveyed who affiliated with the language</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3–2: Active and passive fluency in Ngalakgan and Ngandi in 2001, self-reported (Lee and Dickson 2003: 48–50)*

Another issue with existing characterisations of influences of Roper River Kriol is the common omission of reference to Ritharrŋu/Wägilak which is the most widely known traditional language in Ngukurr today (Lee and Dickson 2003), and has been for at least half a century. In the 1970s, Heath noted that:

> Compared to many other languages in the Northern Territory, Ritharrŋu is still quite viable. It is spoken by reasonably substantial groups at Ngukurr (Roper River) and Lake Evella, as well as a number of outstations. Children seem to be learning the language well in most cases, although at Ngukurr many of them now speak English (in creole form) among themselves. (Heath 1980c: 3)

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45 Note that two common substrate Kriol verbs, *moi* 'threaten' and *maj* 'curse' (i.e. to proclaim as sacred) are attested in existing documentation as cognate with Warndarrang exclusively. Given that Warndarrang has had some lexical impact on Kriol, then perhaps it is worth considering Warndarrang for the potential of broader substrate influence.

46 Heath’s grammatical description names the language as Ritharrŋu, but mentions that “this is, strictly, a name for one of the *matha* (clan) groups” (Heath 1980c: 2). Wägilak is also a common name used in reference to an equivalent or near-equivalent language spoken by the members of the Dhuwa moiety. Strictly speaking, Ritharrŋu is spoken by members of the Yirritja moiety.
The likely reason that Ritharrŋu and Wägilak are not usually considered to have influenced Kriol is that speakers of these languages did not arrive in Ngukurr in significant numbers until the 1940s (Harris 1986: 231), probably after creolisation had occurred. Note though that Munro, unlike Harris, does not claim that creolisation processes were complete by this period so there is a case to be made for them to be considered as having potential substrate influence, at least in terms of Munro’s study. It seems reasonable to at least consider Ritharrŋu (and Wägilak) as adstrate languages that may have contributed to contemporary Kriol. Although Ritharrŋu and Wägilak speakers were the last to move permanently to the Roper River Mission, there is now a 70-year history in which they have been a significant part of the language ecology of the Roper River Mission/Ngukurr.

Aside from the above issues, Munro’s study makes the strongest attempt to date to differentiate levels of influence among substrate languages of Kriol, and uses language ecology as a variable. Munro summarises the ultimate choice to use only Ngalakgan, Nunggubuyu, Marra and Alawa in her application of the Transfer Constraints approach as follows:

Warndarrang and Ngandi having the least number of speakers, now and presumably in the past, are regarded as the least influential of the substrates. The remaining four languages were highly represented in the wider Roper River Region. Features from these languages that were transferred to individual speaker varieties of the expanding NT Pidgin would, therefore, be most likely retained in the creole due to their high frequency. (Munro 2004: 78)

Despite the issues already discussed, this reduced group represents an evidence-based attempt to differentiate levels of influence among various substrate languages. However a further potential issue arises in that Munro does not test the Transfer Constraints approach against the possibility that the languages have variable degrees of influence. That is, each of the four languages are given equal importance when, for example, surveyed for shared features in order to apply the reinforcement principle of frequency (Munro 2004: 33). Evidence provided in this thesis demonstrates that different languages have different levels of influence, at least lexically, upon Kriol. Marran languages, and in particular Marra, are shown below to have a greater influence than other traditional languages of the region in shaping the lexicon of Kriol. It is possible that applying this finding to the analysis of substrate influence in other areas such as syntax could improve predications or understandings of creolisation processes. This is discussed further in §3.6 where I suggest how a more nuanced consideration of variable
substrate influences may improve predictions made by the Transfer Constraints Approach under Munro (2004).

It should also be noted that correlations between Kriol and Marra and other Marran languages like Alawa have been pointed out previously. An impression from early work on Alawa noted a striking correlation between Alawa and Kriol:

In Alawa, tense-aspect-mood and case are indicated by suffixation of auxiliary stems and substantives respectively; in PE [Pidgin English] they are indicated by preposed words. However the contrasts distinguished are found to be in nearly all respects identical. In surface structure the languages are very different; in deep structure and semantically they are almost identical... (Sharpe 1972: 9)

Another publication noting Marra’s unique lexical contribution to Kriol is a compilation of stories in Kriol and English authored by Kriol-speaking students and graduates of Deakin University: *Blekbala Stori* (Deakin University (Faculty of Arts) 2004). In discussing the language used in the collection of stories Cherry Daniels (of Ngukurr) and Rhonda Bunbury (Deakin University) note in the introductory material:

... there is no Kriol or English equivalent to the Mara word *galagala*, meaning tree platform for the dead, in the story 'Holigel'. Other Mara words in this story include *migamiga* for leech ... and *wanguluwan* meaning a poor person, without wealth or parents. (ibid: 15)

Graber (1987) offers a concise analysis on the Kriol particle *na* which has more functions in Kriol, particularly in discourse, than its English etymon *now*. Graber also notes the similarity between *na* and particles in traditional languages. It is possibly no coincidence that one of the comparable languages he identifies is Marra, in which the particle *mingi* has similar functions to the Kriol *na*.

The remainder of this chapter provides data to investigate the lexical influence of traditional languages on Kriol by surveying major word classes and describing non-English based lexemes occurring in each. A description of the methodology used to gather this data is provided below.

### 3.3 Methodology

As discussed in §1.3, the present study is grounded in the ethnography of communication, enabled by years working with Marra and Kriol speakers in Ngukurr prior to the commencement of PhD research (see §1.3.2). Specific to the fieldwork

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47 An extract of the English translation of the text *Holigel* is reproduced in Appendix 8.
carried out for the present study, Kriol data was gathered via further participant-observation and individual or small group interviews. Additional useful data was gained through translating Marra texts into Kriol.\(^48\) It should also be noted that during fieldwork the documentation of Marra was prioritised, following community motivations and the critically endangered nature of the language. In many cases, focused work on Kriol (e.g. recording sessions) was relegated to occasions when members of the Marra documentation team were unavailable.

In order to accurately document contemporary Kriol, it was important to target young Kriol speakers. Gathering data from younger Kriol speakers who did not speak a substrate language allowed for a clearer indication of substrate lexical influence. This is based on the assumption that Kriol speakers using lexemes from substrate languages in their Kriol with little competency in the language(s) of origin, would do so only because those lexemes had been fully incorporated into the Kriol lexicon.

A total of seventeen Kriol speakers aged 40 and under (the majority were in their 20s) contributed to 12 hours and 38 minutes of Kriol recordings. Just over half of the recorded materials were made during interviews with small groups of two to three Kriol speakers, which resulted in capturing conversational data between native speakers as well as interview-style data. The contributions of this young cohort towards the documentation and description of Roper River Kriol are significant to the extant body of research on Kriol; previous research (e.g. the work of Sandefur, Munro and Nicholls) has used data gathered primarily from senior people who typically were also speakers of substrate language(s). The Kriol data presented in this thesis reflects contemporary Kriol speech of young people to a degree not attested in previous research on Kriol.

3.4 **Non-English based lexemes in Kriol**

A key feature that distinguishes the Roper variety of Kriol from other Kriol varieties is a set of non-English-based lexemes that, in most cases, are derived from the lexicons of the original languages of the immediate region. Collectively, these lexemes show

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\(^{48}\) While the Kriol translations of Marra texts produced a significant corpus of Kriol data, and were useful for directly mapping Marra to Kriol, it is sub-optimal data in other ways: firstly, they were not spontaneous Kriol texts and secondly, they were provided by elderly people who were bi- or multilingual in Kriol and one or more substrate languages. They were therefore potentially subject to interference based on competencies in those languages and not representative of contemporary Kriol.
considerable variability in word class, frequency, geographic distribution and age
distribution. Non-English based lexemes are attested in the following word classes:

- verbs, categorising a wide variety of events;
- nouns, including body parts, kinterms, plants and animals;
- proper names, including place names, nicknames, personal names;
- adjectives; and
- interjections and tag questions.

The only word class in which all lexemes appear to be derived from English is the class of
pronouns.\footnote{Note, though, that semantically the Kriol pronominal system incorporates features not found in English but are shared with most or all substrate languages. This is discussed in §1.5.4.} The non-English based lexemes considered in the discussion below are those
known to most or all adult Kriol speakers in Ngukurr and have a phonological form
unrelated to semantically-related English lexemes. Non-English based lexemes with
restricted age distribution (e.g. only known to older people) are not discussed in detail.

It was not possible to apply usage-based criteria to determine which lexemes are widely
known because (a) the Kriol corpus used is insufficient for that purpose and (b) a
number of the identified lexemes, despite being widely known, occur infrequently (often
due to highly specific semantics or their referents occurring rarely). The distribution of
knowledge of lexemes was assessed qualitatively by interviewing a number of unrelated
Kriol speakers aged in their 20s. It was assumed that if multiple young people who rarely
interacted were confident in using or defining a given lexeme, then it was widely known
throughout the adult speech community. Interviewees also regularly gave their own
insights into how widely-known and frequently-used various lexemes were.

Many of the lexemes identified in this study have not been previously noted, as few
previous studies have examined the lexicon of Kriol in detail, particularly in relation to
substrate influence. Munro’s study of substrate influence focuses on grammatical
influence via the syntax/semantic interface. Harris touched upon substrate influences on
the lexicons of NT Pidgin and Kriol but, as already mentioned, did not analyse them
closely, briefly characterising the influence as predominantly restricted to animal and
plant terms and kinterms (Harris 1986: 299). Hudson’s discussion of the Fitzroy Valley
dialect of Kriol also briefly examines non-English derived lexemes (Hudson 1983: 131–
135). She notes Kriol speakers in that location frequently using Walmajarri words but
attributes this to adults commonly being bilingual or multilingual (ibid: 9). This differs
from the current situation in Ngukurr where few adults are competent speakers of a traditional language. Hudson notes that aside from Walmajarri-Kriol bilinguals using Walmajarri words in Kriol, a few words from Walmajarri have gained currency in Kriol regardless of the speaker’s traditional language heritage, though she has only five such examples.\footnote{Examples given are: \textit{pîrki} ‘hot coals’, \textit{munda} ‘belly’ and three exclamations (\textit{yaraba}, \textit{mangei}, \textit{parrei}).}

The context in which we find non-English based lexemes in Roper Kriol also differs from that of mixed languages like Gurindji Kriol or Light Warlpiri (see Meakins 2011; O’Shannessy 2005). Unlike Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri, no morphemes from substrate languages are found in Kriol (although at least two inflected verb-phrases are attested that have seemingly been borrowed as unanalysed idiomatic expressions) and there are few examples of substrate loans being inflected with Kriol morphology.

The major body of work pertaining to the lexicon of Kriol is the \textit{Kriol Dikshenri} (Lee 2004). Initially compiled by SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) in the 1980s and updated in the 1990s, it was produced at a time when the organisation was focused on Bible translation and developing Kriol literacy practices (SIL-IAAB 1986; 1996). It was re-worked into an online version with some revisions in 2004 (Lee). A particularly useful feature of the dictionary is the attempt to differentiate varieties of Kriol by marking headwords as pertaining to one of four geographic locations, including Ngukurr (thereby representing the Roper variety of Kriol).

The \textit{Kriol Dikshenri} includes 277 non-English based headwords marked as occurring in the Ngukurr dialect of Kriol (i.e. Roper Kriol). This data was valuable for the present study, but was also found to be incomplete. My own fieldwork uncovered approximately 100 further non-English based lexemes known to Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. In addition, there were numerous examples of entries and headwords that could be improved given additional information ascertained during the present study. Potential improvements include more accurate orthographic representations of some headwords or improved definitions based on additional or clarifying information.

An example is the headword \textit{languna} defined as ‘goose’. This word has the phonological form /\textipa{laŋguṇa}/ which would most appropriately be written in Kriol as \textit{langgurna}. Note also the imprecise definition. Specifically, \textit{langgurna} refers to the species \textit{Anseranas semipalmata} which has a more precise folk name in English and Aboriginal English,
'magpie goose'. This would be a preferable dictionary definition. Further information pertaining to etymology is not provided in *Kriol Diksheni*. In the case of *langgurna*, the word occurs in most of the traditional languages of the Roper/Gulf region including Marra, Warndarrang, Yanyuwa, Alawa, Ritharrŋu and Ngalakgan.

Another issue with existing headwords is that some are incorrectly allocated to a particular geographic location, such as the exclamations *genwo* 'oh yeah', *ngalei* 'oh yeah' and *werdei/worde/wudi* 'expression of pleasure/mild surprise' which are not used in Ngukurr as the dictionary suggests but are derived from Gunwinyguan languages of Central Arnhem Land and associated with the Barunga variety of Kriol.

In the following sections, numerous lexemes are described that could be added to future editions of the *Kriol Diksheni* or incorporated into existing entries in order to improve them.

### 3.4.1 Nouns

Combining primary data from this study and data recovered from the *Kriol Diksheni* (Lee 2004), over 200 non-English based nouns have been noted as being in current use in Roper Kriol. Around 40 of these were not previously recognised in the *Kriol Diksheni*. Not all of the 200 total were widely known but around 60 can be considered to be clearly attested in contemporary Roper Kriol by most or all adult speakers. The remaining nouns are restricted to older generations or are not commonly known. The full set of non-English based nouns in Kriol can be analysed in a number of ways, each revealing noteworthy aspects, including: the semantic categories that are likely to include substrate-derived lexemes; the language of origin of lexemes; and new information that increases the depth of documentation of the Kriol lexicon.

Regarding semantic domains in which these nouns dominate, a small but significant subset are kinterms — ten proper kinterms and two 'auxiliary' kinterms. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. A proportion of nouns relate to the biological world — local food sources ('bush tucker'), medicines, other plants and animals — and a number of these are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Other semantic categories evidenced among non-English based nominals include terms relating to pre-invasion ceremonial and cultural traditions, some artefacts, a small set of body parts (often taboo and/or relating to sexual organs and activity) and others from miscellaneous categories. A summary of semantic domains in which common non-English based Kriol nouns occur is presented in Table 3–3:
It is possible to semantically categorise these nouns in alternative ways. For instance, eighteen of the nouns can be used as person reference terms (e.g. *junggayi ‘ceremonial boss’, lambarra ‘father-in-law’, munanga ‘non-Indigenous person’). Six are body parts that are also taboo swear words. Four of the animals are prominent *drimin ‘totems’. Three or four plants are known for their medicinal properties and eight of the plant and animal terms can be categorised as food. The categories in which these nouns occur, especially the prevalence of kinterms, does not necessarily accord with patterns found in other creoles, where other analyses have identified categories such as ‘private’, ‘cultural’, ‘plants and animals’ or other domains mentioned in the summary provided in §3.2.1.

In terms of existing Kriol documentation (the *Kriol Dikshenri*, in particular), 26 of the 60+ nouns found to be widely known in Roper Kriol were not in the *Kriol Dikshenri*. This suggests that the lexical impact that substrate languages have had on Kriol has been under-acknowledged. Those 26 nouns are listed in Table 3–4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic domain</th>
<th>Number of nouns (N=64)</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kinterms</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>*gagu ‘mother’s mother’, *jiwa ‘widow’, *baba ‘sibling’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body (body parts and related health terms)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>*burrandi ‘scabies’, *garnda ‘bottom’, *murnda ‘muscle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceremonial, ‘cultural’</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>*raman ‘feathers used as ceremonial adornment’, *junggayi ‘ceremonial boss’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>*migamiga ‘leech’, *wakwak ‘crow’, *mawurrugu ‘type of baitfish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plants</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>*warlan ‘coolibah tree’, *jupi ‘blackcurrant’, *yarlbun ‘lily seed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscellaneous</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>*warnu ‘tobacco/ash mix for chewing’, *wadi ‘stick’, *munanga ‘non-Indigenous person’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3–3: Commonly occurring non-English based nouns in Kriol, by semantic domain
A further thirteen non-English based nouns were identified that were also absent from the Kriol Dikshenri, however there is not strong evidence that those lexemes are known to all or most Kriol speakers but rather appear to be restricted to older generations. Examples include: magurrmagurr ‘dragonfly’, jamarlak ‘clapstick’, gilyirring-gilyirring ‘mermaid (totemic)’ and galagala ‘platform (pre-contact elevating structure)’.

The majority of non-English based nominals also occur in Marra. Only a few of those are attested only in Marra with the bulk occurring in Marra and other substrate languages. Marra-only nominals include muluri ‘mother-in-law’s brother’ and nyingaya ‘spirit, intuition’. Given the high level of shared vocabulary between Marran languages coupled with reinforcement processes during creolisation, it is expected that Kriol lexemes occurring in Marra will also occur in other Marran languages. Common terms occurring in at least two Marran languages (but not other languages) include janurr ‘snot’, gura ‘semen’ and raman ‘ceremonial feathers/down’. Several terms like murnda ‘muscle’, warajarra ‘floodwater’, burrandi ‘scabies’ and bandiyan ‘king brown snake’ occur in Nunggubuyu and Marran languages, while a few terms are found in most or all local languages: examples include munanga ‘non-Indigenous person’, dumbuyumbu ‘sandalwood’ and langgurna ‘magpie goose’. Of the small number that do not occur in Marra, some are derived from languages in New South Wales and made their way into Kriol via Pidgin English. Examples include wadi ‘stick’, binji ‘belly’ and gabarra ‘head’. A handful of exclusively Nunggubuyu words are widely known: words like anga ‘house’ and wungarri ‘fight’ are used synonymously alongside the English derived terms kemp/haus.
and fait (respectively), whereas ngalaligi is the most common word used to describe sea turtle (an animal not occurring in Ngukurr's environs but common in Numbulwar where many Nunggubuyu speakers reside). Other languages contribute few common lexemes with some exceptions being jupi 'blackcurrant' which occurs in Ngandi and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak and mawurrugu 'type of bait fish' and warnu 'ash for chewing with tobacco', which occur in Alawa and/or Warndarrang but not Marra.

3.4.2 Proper Names

Non-English proper names are prevalent in Kriol and this category, in particular, demonstrates considerable variability between speakers, mostly attributable to differing degrees of knowledge of local Indigenous place names. These differences are evidenced mostly according to age but also correspond to individual experiences of interacting with country. Non-English proper names with currency in Kriol consist of:

- Place names
- Language names
- Traditional or Aboriginal names
- Some nicknames
- Skin names and moiety/semi-moiety names
- Names of ceremonies.

The names used and methods employed by Kriol speakers when referring to places within the region can be conceived of as a continuum in which one end represents places referred to exclusively by an unaltered Indigenous name and the opposite end in which an Anglicised placename is used to the exclusion of any Indigenous placename. In between these poles we find places dually referred to by an Anglicised and Indigenous name but with differing degrees of dominance afforded to either placename. This continuum is demonstrated in Figure 3–1:
Figure 3–1: Continuum of placenaming in Kriol

Examples of common placenames and their position along this continuum include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous placename</th>
<th>Dominant form used by English speakers</th>
<th>Dominant form used by Kriol speakers</th>
<th>Notes on usage by Kriol speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jilwili</td>
<td>Costello [kɒsˈtelɔː]</td>
<td>Kastalou ['kastəlu]</td>
<td>Jilwili known by few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnanda</td>
<td>Turkey Lagoon [ˈtɜkləʊɡən]</td>
<td>Tekiligun ['tɛkɪlɪɡʊn]</td>
<td>Elders and some with affiliations to the place know and/or use Barnanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yawurrwarda [ˈjawuʁwaːdə]</td>
<td>Yellow Water [ˈjeləʊˌwɔːrə] or [ˈjeləʊˌwɔːrə]</td>
<td>Yalowada ['jeləwədə]</td>
<td>Only elders know Yawurrwarda. Note that the Anglicised name is a corruption of the original placename which has been adopted by Kriol speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malambuybuy</td>
<td>Boomerang Lagoon [ˈbʊməræŋlɑːˈɡuːn]</td>
<td>Bumareng ['bʊmərɛŋ]</td>
<td>Malambuybuy known by many, used by some, particularly if affiliated with the location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurrululinya</td>
<td>Maria Island</td>
<td>Maraiyalen</td>
<td>Rarely visited place, not known to all. Many who know this place know the original name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardangaja</td>
<td>Long Billabong</td>
<td>Longbilibong</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayirrinji</td>
<td>Towns River</td>
<td>Taunsriva or Nayirrinji</td>
<td>Both known and used by most or all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above there is a large, perhaps unquantifiable, number of Indigenous placenames that are no longer in living memory and do not have a corresponding English-based placename. A significant amount of documentation of placenames has occurred, for example via land claims and through the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority as well as in language documentation, but it appears as though – in Ngukurr at least – much of this knowledge is limited to a few elders. Even among older people, placename knowledge appears to be fragmented given the sedentary lifestyles that have been predominant in recent decades. Interviews carried out with younger Kriol speakers show comparatively limited knowledge of Indigenous placenames, particularly, for example, named billabongs or landforms that are associated with Creation beings or totems that have no man-made infrastructure associated with them.

A more complex picture is revealed for names of the few larger population centres such as Ngukurr, Minyerri and Numbulwar. Each community has an original Indigenous placename and an English-based placename that replaced it following colonisation. In more recent history, government and administrative bodies have restored an Indigenous placename, although often with slightly different referent than was originally used. This has created a complex contemporary system of place reference where English speakers typically use an Anglicised version of an Indigenous placename, but many Kriol speakers are retaining the colonial placename but influenced by Kriol phonology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Anglicised Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walgundu</td>
<td>St Vidgeons</td>
<td>Walgundu or Walgundukeiv</td>
<td>Anglicised name known to many but not commonly used among Kriol speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamunggu</td>
<td>Maria Lagoon</td>
<td>Wamunggu</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrunju</td>
<td>Ruined City</td>
<td>Burrunju</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namiliwiri</td>
<td>['namiliwiri'] casual or ['namiliwiri'] careful</td>
<td>Namiliwiri ['namiliwiri'] (casual) or ['namiliwiri'] (careful)</td>
<td>Anglicised version reduced by a syllable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badawarrka</td>
<td>Badawarrka [badaˈwaːka]</td>
<td>Badawarrka ['badawarka]</td>
<td>Anglicised version does not include the flapped rhotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuyagiba</td>
<td>Wuyagiba</td>
<td>Wuyagiba</td>
<td>No Anglicised version in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalawan</td>
<td>Nalawan</td>
<td>Nalawan</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3–5: Sample selection of placenames in Roper region with reference to naming strategies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier One</th>
<th>Tier Two</th>
<th>Tier Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-contact placename</td>
<td>Colonial placename</td>
<td>Forms used by English speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngukurr</strong> [ʹŋukur]</td>
<td>Roper River (Mission) (Est. 1908)</td>
<td>'Nooka' ['nuka]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Menyerri</strong> [ʹmejeri]</td>
<td>Hodgson Downs (Est. 1870s)</td>
<td>'Minyerri’ [min'yeːj]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numbulwar</strong> [ʹnumbulwai]</td>
<td>Rose River (Mission) (Est. 1952)</td>
<td>'Numbulwah' ['numbulwa:] or rarely ['nambulwa:]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-6: Three historical tiers of placenames for major population centres in the Roper River Region

### 3.4.3 Interjections and Tag Questions

Interjections represent a word class in which non-English based forms comprise a significant proportion of the total number of lexemes occurring in that word class. High-frequency and universally-known and used interjections unrelated to English include:

- *gen* ‘oops’
- *gardi* ‘goodness’, ‘crikey’
- *guyu* ‘look out’
- *yuwai* ‘yes’
- *gaja, gajinga* ‘damn’
- *anyany* ‘cute’
- *yagai* ‘ouch’
- *ma* ‘OK’
- *balngay* ‘I wish’, expression of longing to have or possess

The preliminary attempt to quantify the prevalence of non-English based lexemes discussed in §3.5.1 supports the notion that these are high-frequency words, where *gen*, *gardi* and *yuwai* were used multiple times and by both young participants featured in the analysed recording. There are other non-English based interjections which are also commonly heard but possibly falling out of use among younger Kriol speakers:

- *gabu* ‘oh’, ‘hey’
- *agu* ‘oh’, ‘oops’

[^51]: ‘Nuka’ ['nuka] is most commonly attested among Kriol speakers when speaking to non-Indigenous people. However some young people (especially school students) may not be aware that this is an Anglicised version and do not use the ‘Ngukurr’ [ʹŋukur] form.
English-based forms are also common, including:

- *aj* 'look', 'ready' (from 'watch')
- *najing* 'no' (from 'nothing')
- *nomo* counterfactual
- *trubala* 'truly', 'really'
- *bobala* 'poor thing'

Interjections are generally less-carefully described in grammars of traditional Aboriginal languages given that their function is primarily discursive, they have no morphology and little bearing on syntax. An exception is Evans' description of exclamations in the not-too-distant Gunwinyguan language, Mayali (Evans 1992a; 2003: 618–627). In reference material of the languages of the immediate Ngukurr area, however, exclamations and interjections are rarely documented, making it difficult to precisely determine the etymologies of the non-English based interjections listed above, although some information can be ascertained as discussed below.

*Yuwai* 'yes' is not attested in any languages of the area but has cognates in languages further afield such as Warlpiri and Gurindji, suggesting it was borrowed into Kriol via pidgin rather than it being a case of substrate transfer. It is widely used across the entire chain of Kriol varieties spoken in Northern Australia, as are most of the other exclamations listed above. *Gardi* 'goodness!', like *yuwai*, is not attested in any existing documentation of areal languages but unlike *yuwai* it is restricted to Roper Kriol. Although *gardi* does not occur in Heath's volume on Marra (1981), it is attested in recently recorded Marra texts, as in:

> (3.1) **Barnarna ngana ngaya Violet, warriya.**
> FaSi the(F) this(F) (name) poor_thing
> **Gardi,** wuj-ganga na.
> goodness lose_weight-3SG:go;PST;PUNCT now
> This is my aunty Violet, poor thing. Goodness, she's become thin now.

The frequent use of *gardi* by Marra speakers when speaking both Marra and Kriol, along with the word being restricted to the Roper variety of Kriol, suggests that it has transferred from Marra (and possibly other languages, although there is no such evidence). It is commonly used by all adult Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. The following example is from a speaker in his mid-twenties:
Most of the common interjections mentioned have a wide distribution, occurring in other Kriol varieties and multiple traditional languages. Some, such as yagay, ma and anyany, are also commonly used by speakers of Aboriginal English (non-Kriol speakers) in the region. It is likely that even if they occur in Marra, their presence in Kriol is as a result of wide distribution among multiple traditional languages.

In contrast to interjections with wide distribution, the exclamation bal-nga-yi ‘I wish’ appears to be an interesting example of an inflected Marra verb fossilising and being borrowed directly into Kriol. It is unclear whether bal-nga-yi was used traditionally in Marra as an unanalysed idiom, but it is possible to analyse it as a verb:

```
(3.3) bal-nga-yi
mark-1SG>3SG:{-janyi};PST;PUNCT
I marked it.
```

*Bal* is an uninflecting coverb that, with the inflecting auxiliary verb root –*janyi*, means “mark, decorate; write on” (Heath 1981: 438). As an idiom and interjection, the inflected form *bal-nga-yi* carries a sense of wishing/longing to have, obtain or participate in whatever the topic of discussion is. An example in Marra discourse is given below, where Freda Roberts was commenting on a photo showing relatives holding large saltwater mussels:

```
(3.4) mindi-waba, nang-gaya nya-murrji-yu
saltwater_mussel that[M] OBL-hand-LOC
warri-galurndu... bal-nga-yi.
3DU-have;PRS[3] I_wish
They have mindi-waba in their hands... I wish (I did too / I was there).
```

The example below shows KM, a mid-twenties Kriol speaker with no knowledge of Marra, using *balngayi* in a similar way:

```
(3.5) GD: Kenbra mi oldei gu
Canberra 1SG HABIT go
I go to Canberra
```
DR:  Ai laigi gubek jeya
     1SG  like:TR return  there
     I’d like to go back there

KM:  Balngayi,  ai laigi tour around du
     1_wish  1SG  like:TR tour  around  too
     I wish (it was me), I’d like to tour around too

Note that the two interjections listed above as falling out of use, agu ‘oh, oops’ and gabu ‘oh, hey’, are also both attested in Marra (Heath 1981). Kriol speakers with no knowledge of Marra appear not to use these. Agu appears to have been replaced by gen and gabu by ei ‘hey’.

Tag questions, like interjections, are a small set of words where non-English based forms are common. Tag questions are not inflected in Kriol, and three of the four main forms are non-English based. Two of the most common tag questions, ngi and indit (from ‘isn’t it’), indicate uncertainty. They are used to elicit further information, confirmation or can be used in discourse as an interjection expressing surprise. Nga and ngabi are typically not used as interjections. They are used persuasively, urging the listener to agree with the speaker’s proposition, request or rhetoric. The form ee is also common as a generic tag question, presumably an interpretation of tag functions of the English ‘hey’.

All these forms are common, evidenced by the short discussion on the frequency of non-English based lexemes below (§3.5.1). Examples of the use of ngi in both Marra and Kriol occur elsewhere in this thesis: (4.31) shows its use in Marra and (5.17) shows a young Kriol speaker using it. Likewise, Kriol examples featuring ngabi can be found in (2.3) and (5.6) and in the following Marra example:

(3.6)  gana n-nga-radburr wugi  nani  nanya  ngabi,
       REL  N-nga-country  3SG[POSS]  the[M;OBL]  this[M;OBL]  AFFIRM
             Walanngarra.
             placename
             ... that’s his country, right, Walanngarra.
Recent Marra documentation suggests *ngi* and *ngabi* both occur in the language, however given limited documentation of such particles cross-linguistically, it is unclear which languages besides Marra might also feature these forms.52

### 3.4.4 Interrogatives

The majority of Kriol interrogatives are derived from English forms, though sometimes with distinct semantics from their etymons, such as *wotaim* having the same temporally broad function of ‘when’, rather than the more narrow function of its etymon ‘what time’. The full class of Kriol interrogatives awaits detailed description with only Sandefur providing some brief analysis to date (1979: 96–98). Other common English-derived Kriol interrogatives include:

- *wanim* ‘what’
- *weya* ‘where’
- *wijan* ‘which’
- *wotfo, bla wanim, wanim bla* ‘why’
- *wijei* ‘where (directional), ’how’
- *(h)u* ‘who’

All Kriol speakers do, however, use one interrogative, *ngarni*, which also occurs in Marra, Warndarrang and Alawa. In Marra, Heath described it as “a fairly uncommon all-purpose interrogative expression which can be translated by some vague expression such as *well?* or *how about it?*” (1981: 175). An example occurs in a Warndarrang text by Isaac Joshua:

(3.7) **Ngarni** ra-wiriyi-yu?  
how_about NC-Aboriginal_person-ABS  
What about (those) Aboriginal people?  

[I, Warndarrang, Heath 1980a: 111]

This matches uses in contemporary Kriol from bilingual elders such as Betty Roberts:

(3.8) **Ngarni** det garrimarla im blekwan yuga?  
how_about the taipan 3SG black:ADJ TAG  
What about the taipan, it’s black isn’t it?  

[BR, 20100826MARRAgroupNUMgd01a_01:38:01]

And from younger speakers with no knowledge of Marra, Alawa or Warndarrang:

---

52 *Ng* appears in the Nunggubuyu dictionary (Heath 1982b: 143) but with a different function, indicated by the translation/definition “here you are! (take this)”.
145

(3.9) *Ngarni na gobarani?*

how about now uncle/nephew

What's happening now, uncle?

The use of *ngarni* in Kriol is fairly infrequent (as in Marra, according to Heath) but appears to be stable and used by all adults in Ngukurr.

### 3.4.5 Adjectives

Identifying adjectives as a word class is often a complex matter in Australian languages:

> As noted by a number of authors [references omitted], Australian languages often do not show any morphosyntactic contrast between nouns and adjectives. (Pensalfini 2003: 57)

Marra is one such language where Heath (1981: 63) found that “word class distinctions are rather sharp” but that “there is no clear distinction between adjectival and non-adjectival nouns”. Pensalfini (2003: 57–58) and others (e.g. Heath 1984: 152–153) have noted though that it is possible to apply criteria that distinguish adjectives from nouns as a distinct part of speech in some languages (Jingulu and Nunggubuyu respectively).

Sandefur noted that for Kriol “adjectives are not always easily distinguished from nouns” (1979: 100), resembling patterns found in traditional Australian languages.

Adjectives in Kriol have proven difficult to conclusively describe and consensus among researchers about nominal word classes in Kriol remains elusive. Two adjectival suffixes -wan and -bala have been discussed by Sandefur (1979) and Munro (2004). However, analytical difficulties are created by: adjectives occurring without the suffixes -wan and -bala; suffixes being used interchangeably but differences remaining unclear; and the use of the -bala suffix in other word classes. More recently, Nicholls (2009: 44–71) analysed noun phrases in Roper Kriol and argued that modifiers (e.g. adjectives) can act as fused heads of noun phrases. The discussion by Nicholls on this topic is more thorough than can be offered here and readers are encouraged to engage with her analysis for further information.

Given the fuzzy nature of the category, I can only offer an imprecise attempt at describing a class of commonly occurring adjectives and adjective-like words not derived from English. Table 3–7 lists ten adjectives and adjective-like words that are widely known and used by adult Kriol speakers.
Lexeme | Gloss | Language of origin | Kriol Dikshenri entry (Locations used)
--- | --- | --- | ---
nyukurr | sacred | Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang | adj. sacred. (Ngukurr)
juljul | flirty, seductive | ? | adj. sexy; randy; horny; sexually excited. (Barungu, Ngukurr)
nyarr | well-suited, highly-appropriate | Ngalakgan | adj. good; excellent; fantastic; pleasant; good looking. (Ngukurr)
bundubundu | pregnant | Marra, Alawa, Mangarrayi, Yanyuwa | adj. pregnant. (Ngukurr)
ngutjurr | kind, giving, generous | Alawa | as "ngutju": adj. generous. / as "ngatju": adj. generous. / as "ngatjurr": vi. be generous.: (Ngukurr)
balginy | salty, brackish | Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ritharrŋu/Wägilak | as "barlkiny": adj. bitter; unsweetened. / as "balgin": adj. bitter; unsweetened. (Ngukurr)
dinyma | smart, intelligent | ? | None
wanguu | 'orphan', solitary, without support or accompaniment | Marra, Alawa | n. widow; orphan; poor person. / also "wanguulwanguulu": n. widows; orphans; poor people. Note: plural of wanguulu. (Ngukurr)
jinggarli | 'proud', show-off | ? | as "jinggali": vi. proud; happy. / also "jinggarlibala": n. proud person. (Barungu, Ngukurr)
murdu | disobedient | Yanyuwa; defined as 'deaf' in Marra | None

Table 3–7: Common non-English-based adjectives in Kriol

Of the ten lexemes listed above, two – *murdu* and *dinyma* – were not previously documented in the *Kriol Dikshenri*. Table 3–7 also shows that where it is possible to determine a language of origin, Marran languages, and particularly Marra, are most often the languages from which the adjectives are borrowed.

Note also that there are other non-English based lexemes that have adjectival forms but are considered to belong to other word classes. Sandefur provided the example of *munanga* ‘European, non-Indigenous’ used as a noun (as used in Chapter 2) and modifying other nouns, as in:

(3.10) *tumatj* la *munanga* *eriya* dumaji
too much LOC European area because because I was too often in Western areas.

There are also instances of non-English based verbs undergoing inflection to derive adjectives. The example below involves the verb *gubal* ‘scavenge’, originally a Marra coverb, which becomes an adjective by adding the suffix –*wan*:
3.5 DISTRIBUTION OF NON-ENGLISH BASED KRIOL LEXEMES

3.5.1 FREQUENCY

The above summary of non-English based lexemes, and that which follows in Chapter 4, is based on qualitative research. Given that many lexemes discussed have quite highly specialised or narrow referents and meaning, we can assume they occur infrequently. To provide a quantitative assessment that determines their frequency would require a larger corpus of Kriol data than was possible within the scope of the present study.

It is possible, however, to provide some indication of the frequency of non-English based lexemes in the speech of young Kriol speakers using data samples taken from appropriate naturally occurring Kriol data. While most of the recordings created as part of this study were interviews and elicitation and therefore not useful as usage-based data, one particularly useful recording was made with two male speakers in their 20s who carried out the 'Family Problems' picture task (see San Roque et al. 2012 for a description of this activity). The resulting recording contains almost 500 utterances from the two men, comprising a total of 2917 words. Little input or influence from the researcher or local Indigenous research assistant who was also present is evident (equating to 49 utterances comprising 249 words); my requirement was to only provide introductory instructions which led to two participants cooperatively carrying out the required tasks with much discussion and little interruption. Table 3–8 summarises the non-English based lexemes used by the two men while carrying out the task.
The task-based nature of the recording appears to have skewed the conversation in various ways. Very few kinterms – of which several are derived from local languages (see Chapter 5) – were used, despite them often being high frequency lexemes in Kriol discourse. Given the complex nature of the task the men undertook, which required negotiation and had no ‘correct’ solution, there was also greater opportunity for the use of negotiating language, lending itself to the use of tag questions, confirmations and self-corrections. The relatively high-frequency of lexemes such as gen ‘oops’, ngi and ngabi (tag questions), and yuwai ‘yes’ may not be evidenced in other speech genres such as narratives, recounts and gossip. This is borne out after similarly surveying the naturally-occuring conversational data presented by Nicholls (2009). She presented a transcript of a four-minute conversation between Kriol speakers, recorded while travelling in a vehicle in Katherine. Their conversation included 22 tokens of non-English based lexemes from a total of 653. Despite a slightly lower proportion of non-English based lexemes (comprising 3.37% of the total, compared to figures of over 4% found in Table 3–8), there were fewer tag questions and no instances of the exclamation gen ‘oops’, but more instances of non-English based kinterms. This is understandable given the discourse genre. The data from Nicholls is summarised in Table 3–9:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Word class (domain)</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Tokens: Dwayne (n=2589)</th>
<th>Tokens: Kamahl (n=328)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abija</td>
<td>noun (kinterm)</td>
<td>mother’s father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabarra</td>
<td>noun (bodypart)</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardi</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>goodness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>oops</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guyu</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>look out!</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manymak</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td>tag</td>
<td>right? (EMPH)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngabi</td>
<td>tag</td>
<td>right? (EMPH)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngi</td>
<td>tag</td>
<td>right? (hesitant)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanguluwan</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>without company</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuwai</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**non-English based lexemes (total # of tokens)** 120 14
as proportion of total 4.635% 4.268%

Table 3–8: Frequency of non-English based lexemes used during the ‘Family problems’ picture task
Lexeme | Word class (domain) | Gloss | Tokens (n=653)
---|---|---|---
*abuji* | noun (kinterm) | father’s mother | 4
*amuri* | noun (kinterm) | father’s father | 1
*baba* | noun (kinterm) | sibling | 2
*(clan name)* | proper noun | (n/a) | 2
*gabu* | interjection | hey, look | 1
*gardi* | interjection | goodness | 3
*munanga* | noun (people) | European | 1
*ngi* | tag | right? (hesitant) | 2
*yuwai* | interjection | yes | 6
non-English based lexemes (total # of tokens) | | | 22
as proportion of total | | | 3.369%

Table 3–9: Frequency of non-English based lexemes in KC_1 conversation data (Nicholls 2009: 219–233)

3.5.2 Age distribution

While investigating Kriol lexemes not derived from English, older residents of Ngukurr – mostly fluent in one or more traditional languages, including Marra – were a common starting point, providing significant lexical and descriptive data. When checking or clarifying words and meanings with younger people, it became apparent that a number of lexemes are falling out of use. The most salient and predictable of these related directly to events and practices that seldom occur in contemporary life, at least in Ngukurr. An example is the verb *warr*\(^53\) which refers to the act of grinding lily seed. Traditionally, grinding stones were used throughout the region and seeds of lilypods (*Nymphaea sp.)* were ground into a paste and used to make a kind of damper. The practice of using grinding stones and grinding lily seed to make damper rarely, if ever, occurs in Ngukurr or its surrounds any more, explaining why the verb *warr* is not recognised by young Kriol speakers aged 20–40.

Changes in lifestyle and cultural practices are reflected in other Kriol verbs no longer used or recognised by younger Kriol speakers. An example is the verb *jalap*, borrowed directly from a Marra coverb, meaning ‘to paddle’. It is prototypically associated with paddling dugout canoes (*muwarda*, see Figure 2–8), a traditional mode of travel for Marra people and many people living around large river systems and coastal areas of the region. The use of dugout canoes was still common in the 1950s when local families would leave the mission for extended periods (weeks or perhaps months) during “school

\(^{53}\)According to Heath, *warr*– as a Marra coverb also means “to... sharpen (knives, etc.)” (1981: 490), assumedly referring to sharpening stone blades (*wanyin*) using other stones, an action akin to using grindstones. Perhaps a better definition of *warr*, at least as a Marra coverb, is “to grind using stone, e.g. lily seed, stone blades”.
holidays”. For people who grew up in these times, j alap would have been a commonly used verb. But this verb was unknown to younger Kriol speakers, apart from one who had heard it in the course of her work as a ranger which involved considerable travel by boat. The young person attributed her knowledge of jalap to working under the supervision of Cherry Daniels, who is a competent Marra speaker (see §2.4.5.5).

Some non-English based lexemes without such an obvious connection to changing cultural practices are also declining in use. Two interjections, gabu and agu, were mentioned in §3.4.3 as examples of lexemes that appear to be being supplanted (note though that agu ‘oh, oops’ is being replaced not by an English term but by another non-English based term: gen). An informal survey of verbs describing various ways of carrying children also demonstrates the declining use and knowledge of some non-English based terms, but simultaneously shows that some terms are stable. Table 3–10 shows how familiar nine participants of various ages were with six non-English based ‘people-carrying’ verbs that occur in Kriol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Age)</th>
<th>Ngabarla ‘carry on shoulder’</th>
<th>Jalaibi ‘carry on hip’</th>
<th>Jarlu ‘walk by the hand’</th>
<th>Burdudup ‘piggyback’</th>
<th>Wirriwirri ‘sit on lap’</th>
<th>Wurrwurrurru ‘cradle/rock to sleep’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FR (~70)</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR (~70)</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA (~50)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>heard but unsure</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB (~50)</td>
<td>☑ (after prompt)</td>
<td>✓ (after prompt)</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ on 3rd guess</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT (~40)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER (20s)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓ (after prompt)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH (20s)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW/KM (20s)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR (20s)</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3–10: Intergenerational knowledge of non-English based ‘children-carrying’ verbs

This shows that all ‘people- or children-carrying’ verbs were known to the two most senior people who were also strong Marra speakers. The two next youngest, aged around 50, were not Marra speakers but had significant close contact with Marra speakers and were familiar with most of the verbs. The responses from younger participants indicate that ngabarla, jalaibi and wirriwirri were becoming redundant while knowledge of burdudup and wurrwurrurru is being maintained and jarlu is known by some. (These verbs are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4).
3.5.3  **GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION**

The geographic distribution of non-English lexemes varies and is often not predictable. Some lexemes are restricted to the Roper variety of Kriol, a number are also known to speakers of Barunga Kriol (the nearest named variety) and a handful have an even wider geographic distribution. As will be discussed further in the following chapter (see §4.7), causal links between geographic distribution and other factors such as language of origin and word class are not as obvious as expected.

High-frequency lexemes in Roper Kriol such as *gardi* and *ngi* (a tag particle) are examples of terms not used outside the region. Given their high frequency and limited geographic distribution, such lexemes have become shibboleths by which Roper Kriol is sometimes identified by speakers of other varieties. A further example of a shibboleth was described to me while delivering a language course in 2009, when a student from Beswick aged in her 50s referred to Roper Kriol speakers as *agu-mob* 'people who say agu', in reference to the Marra exclamation that had transferred into Roper Kriol. In 2013, I translated a story from English into Kriol for a literacy project by a Beswick-based arts organisation, Djilpin Arts (Lewis 2013). One of their local staff members assisted to ensure the translation was appropriate to Beswick/Barunga Kriol which resulted in my translation being good-naturedly ridiculed for its Roperisms. Some of the adjustments made towards Beswick/Barunga Kriol in the translation involving non-English based lexemes are noted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Roperism' deleted from final translation</th>
<th>Preferred Beswick/Barunga Kriol term</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>warajarra</td>
<td>fladwoda</td>
<td>floodwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munyurrumap</td>
<td>hitimbat langa ston</td>
<td>refine/grind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bal</td>
<td>hitimbat (meigim laiga peist)</td>
<td>pound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maj</td>
<td>wunymang</td>
<td>curse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grinplam</td>
<td>moyi</td>
<td>green plum (<em>Buchanania obovata</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guyiya/dogbul</td>
<td>jotmo</td>
<td><em>Grewia retusifolia</em> (no common English word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yarlbun</td>
<td>datam</td>
<td>lily seed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3–11: Variation in non-English based lexemes between Roper and Barunga Kriol in RibaBoi text (Lewis 2013)*

However, there are numerous examples of non-English based lexemes that are not exclusive to Roper Kriol. As mentioned in §3.4.3, some common interjections are widely distributed, sometimes even to non-Kriol speaking Aboriginal English speakers who commonly use variants of the exclamation *anyany* 'cute'. Common Roper Kriol verbs like
baku ‘vomit’, dirrwu ‘dive, go into water’, gumbu ‘urinate’ and wal ‘have a crush on’ were said to be widely used in Barunga Kriol too, according to an accredited Kriol-English interpreter from Beswick who I interviewed in 2011. It remains a further research task to undertake a careful study of dialectal variation across Kriol-speaking communities.

3.6 DISCUSSION

This chapter has introduced the degree to which substrate languages and languages other than English have influenced the lexicon of Kriol. The survey of word classes presented above shows that such lexemes occur in almost all word classes. Preliminary quantitative data indicates that 3–5% of all tokens in Kriol conversations are non-English based lexemes.

Previous research on the lexicons of creoles has started to analyse the semantic domains and word classes in which substrate influence is most commonly found. The data offered in this chapter agrees with previous findings that the nominal word class is one in which substrate lexemes are commonly borrowed. However, the quantitative and qualitative data presented in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis suggests that word classes such as interjections, verbs, kinterms and tag questions also contain a relatively high number of substrate-derived lexical items. Qualitative data presented also shows that substrate nominals occur in a broader range of semantic domains than is sometimes described for other creoles.

Previous research on Kriol was also surveyed and it was found that the existing Kriol Dikshenri could be expanded and improved to better capture the lexical contributions of substrate languages. Several commonly occurring lexemes were not listed, while others had entries that could be improved with more detailed or accurate definitions.

The etymology of substrate lexical items is an area that was found to have been previously under-examined. This has resulted in characterisations of substrate influence in Kriol that are perhaps lacking in nuance. Analyses of the etymology of non-English based lexical material finds that while all substrate languages contribute some lexical material, the contributions are not equal. Marran languages – and in particular, Marra itself – were found to make a disproportionately greater contribution to the lexicon of Kriol. Such findings could have potential ramifications for the application of creolisation theories such as the Transfer Constraints approach which predicts features of creoles based on predicting which features of substrate languages would be reinforced during contact stages and transferred into a creole. It would be possible to revisit the analysis offered by Munro (2004; 2011) but instead of assigning equal weighting to the four
substrate languages surveyed, substrates could be weighted variably based on findings such as those presented in this study.

For example, Munro (2011) makes seven predictions using the Transfer Constraints approach to determine various features of Kriol and found that six of the predictions hold. The predicted feature not found in Kriol was a “distinct evitative mood” (ibid: 471). And while predictions relating to the pronominal system was found to be predominantly correct, Munro does note that the predicted gender distinction in 3rd person singular pronouns was not found in Kriol (ibid: 483). If the influence of Marra was given greater emphasis in the pool of substrates that were assessed, the Transfer Constraints approach may arrive at different predictions. For example, the evitative mood, while common in Gunwinyguan languages spoken to the north of the Roper River (e.g. Heath 1984: 346; Evans 2006b), is rare in Marra. Heath’s description of the category in Marra is “based mainly on elicited examples” (1981: 187) and finds it is “not normally a separate suffixal category (ibid: 228). A Marra-centric reanalysis may have not predicted the transfer of the evitative mood into Kriol and therefore been more accurate. (Note however, that Angelo and Schultze-Berndt (2016) have recently argued that evitative mood is achieved in Kriol with the adverb bambai (from 'by-and-by')).

Similarly, the unfounded prediction by Munro that 3rd person singular pronouns would be marked for gender in Kriol could also be altered or corrected by a Marra-centric reanalysis. Marra, unlike Nunggubuyu, Alawa, Ngandi and Ngalakgan, does not have gendered forms of 3rd person pronominal prefixes, aligning it with Kriol rather than the other substrates. (However in this instance, the analysis is complicated by the assumption that the pidgin upon which Kriol is based would also have probably not had gendered 3rd person singular pronouns.)

The chapter that follows focuses specifically on non-English based verbs occurring in Kriol and presents data that further supports the findings of the present chapter while also describing in detail the prevalence of substrate verbs in Kriol, a word class in which substrate-derived lexemes are not usually thought to commonly occur.
4 Non-English Based Verbs in Kriol

This chapter complements the previous one which surveyed the lexical impact that substrate languages have had on the Kriol lexicon and introduced the notion that Marra and Marran languages have had a disproportionately greater impact than other languages of the immediate region. This chapter focuses specifically on verbs, examining in detail Kriol verbs that are derived from Aboriginal languages. Data presented below show that non-English based verbs are more prevalent in Kriol than was previously thought and represent a significant portion of all non-English based lexemes. Around 60 non-English based verbs are known to most or all adult speakers and a further 18 were found to be in use but with restricted distribution. This significantly increases the number of non-English based verbs that have been documented in Kriol: 50 of the total set of 78 verbs analysed for this chapter were not previously documented in the Kriol Dikshenri. The number of verbs identified also contrasts with widely held notions that nouns are more commonly borrowed than verbs: the previously chapter identified 60 commonly-occurring nouns in Kriol that are derived from Aboriginal languages.

Analysing non-English based verbs in detail is of particular interest for several reasons, including: (a) it is commonly held that in language contact situations, substrate verbs are less likely to transfer into creoles than other parts of speech, such as nouns; (b) it provides further evidence that Marra and Marran languages are more influential languages than other substrates; and (c) the types of events that these substrate verbs categorise can inform the broader discussion on the maintenance and discontinuation of cultural practices.

This chapter begins with a summary of how the presence of substrate verbs has been characterised in Australian creoles and contact languages and more broadly in the typology of creoles. The structure of verbs in the traditional languages of the Roper River region is surveyed, demonstrating that the verbal structures of Marran languages make them prime fodder for contributing lexical material to the set of verbs in Kriol. The set of non-English Kriol verbs is then described in some detail with reference to their etymology, semantics, previous documentation, distribution and frequency. Finally, some hypotheses are put forward regarding what these verbs may tell us about cultural maintenance or loss.
4.1 **Previous Studies on Substrate Verbs in Creoles, Kriol and Other Australian Contact Languages**

In his book *Typology of Verbal Borrowings*, Wohlgemuth (2009) demonstrates that the commonly held idea that nouns are more easily borrowed than verbs is not necessarily true. An example given is German, which accommodates English verbs with less effort than nouns, which require a gender and plural form assigned to them (Wohlgemuth 2009: 245–246). Wohlgemuth finds numerous factors affecting the transfer or borrowing of verbs. Some pertain to general features of the word class, pointing to aspects such as verbs being cognitively and semantically less salient than nouns and also less frequent. Language-specific factors include social and cultural circumstances, such as the nature of contact, and morphological or typological compatibility, although Wohlgemuth argues that "grammatical incompatibility is likely an overestimated factor — if it is relevant at all" (*ibid*: 251).

The main analysis of verbs in Roper Kriol is found in Sandefur (1979: 111–140), who provides an overview of the open class of main verbs, verbal suffixes and auxiliary verbs. Other contributions have come from Steffensen (1979) who briefly described reduplication processes in the Barunga Kriol variety and Munro (2004) and Nicholls (2009) who have added to the description of the Roper Kriol verbal system in their research. None of these authors commented specifically on verbs that are not derived from English forms.

Hudson's study (1983) of Fitzroy Valley Kriol included discussion of its relationship to the traditional language of the area, Walmajarri. Verbs were described in detail but the presence of Walmajarri verbs in Fitzroy Kriol was discussed only briefly. Initially, Hudson comments that "almost all verbs are derived from English" (*ibid*: 37) but later says that "Kriol often borrows .. from Walmajarri compound verbs" (*ibid*: 133). She provides two examples, *wil*’disappear’ and *dilaj*’pester’ but does not provide further examples or description.

Munro considered coverb constructions in her analysis of substrate influences on Kriol (Munro 2004: 100–103) but overlooked the possibility that coverb constructions in Marran languages lend themselves to the direct transfer of substrate coverbs to verbs in Kriol. Her analysis focused on structural features and predicted that substrate influence of coverb constructions would be manifested as "a two verb construction in which one carries the semantic weight and is followed by a root verb that carries the TMA
information" (ibid: 101). Such constructions are not found in Kriol and so this prediction does not hold.

Also of relevance to the Roper Kriol situation is the recent description of the mixed language Gurindji Kriol by Meakins (Meakins 2011; Meakins and O’Shannessy 2012). A third of verbs in Gurindji Kriol are derived from Gurindji, distinguishing it from the neighbouring mixed language Light Warlpiri which has very few Warlpiri-derived verbs. Meakins demonstrates that complex verbs featuring uninflecting coverbs that carry the semantic weight are well-suited to being borrowed or transferred into contact languages. Meakins and O’Shannessy make a further distinction between loose and tight nexus coverb constructions and argue that loose-nexus constructions (found in Gurindji) allow for greater transferability of coverbs than tight-nexus constructions (as found in Warlpiri). This argument in relation to Roper Kriol and Marra is discussed further in the conclusion of this chapter.

The following section briefly surveys verb structure in the languages of the Roper region, showing how coverb structures in Marran languages – which crucially involve uninflecting coverbs as the first constituent – may allow for transfer into Kriol with relatively little effort. This is contrasted with verb structures in highly agglutinating Gunwinyguan languages and it is suggested that they are less suited to allowing verb forms to transfer into Kriol.

4.2 VERBAL STRUCTURES IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF THE ROPER RIVER REGION

Differences in verbal structures of substrate language are a factor that is likely to constrain or aid the transfer of substrate verbs into contact languages and creoles (Thomason & Kaufman 1988; Winford 2003). Also at play are sociohistorical and sociolinguistic factors that contribute to transfer (or lack of transfer) of substrate lexemes of any word class. All the original languages of the Roper region have complex verbal systems though the nature of the complexity varies. Ngandi, Nunggubuyu and Ngalakgan are polysynthetic agglutinating languages belonging to the Gunwinyguan language family. A feature of these languages is the prevalence of noun incorporation in the verb complex as well as a range of other non-initial morphemes prefixed to the verb

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54 The distinction between loose and tight nexus coverb constructions relates to the degree to which a coverb can be separated from the inflecting verb and flexibility of ordering (e.g. in the cases of Gurindji, Warlpiri and Marra, whether the coverb can occur after the inflecting verb).
root. Pronominal information is the first element of these verbs. Examples are given for Ngandi (4.1), Nunggubuyu (4.2) and Ngalakgan (4.3), which demonstrate classic Gunwinyguan verb structures, including an incorporated noun in (4.2):

(4.1)  *bara-ja-ngu-tjjini*
3PL->A-now-eat-PRS\(^{55}\)
They eat it
[Ngandi (Heath 1978b: 224)]

(4.2)  *nga-ngu-yarrga-gambana*
1SG-N-flipper-cook;PRS
I’m cooking the flipper
[Nunggubuyu (Baker et al. 2010: 66)]

(4.3)  *burru-mirlarr-miny*
3NSG-be_born-PST.PUNCT
They were born
[Ngalakgan (Merlan 1983: 180)]

Marra verbs are described briefly in §1.4.2, but the examples below demonstrate the similarity in coverb constructions across three Marran languages: Alawa, Warndarrang and Marra. Coverb constructions in these languages form a single phonological phrase and do not have noun incorporation. The basic and most common form consists of an uninflecting coverb, followed by pronominal information fused to an inflected auxiliary verb. In these coverb constructions, the semantic weight of the event is carried on the uninflecting coverb, as in:

(4.4)  *jangarl-nayiman*\(^{56}\)
die-3SG:M:go;PST
He died
[Alawa (Sharpe 2001a: 48)]

(4.5)  *gaw-ngami*
shout-1SG:do;PST
I shouted
[Warndarrang (Heath 1980a: 59)]

(4.6)  *dalag-barrinbu*
fal-3DU:do;PST;PUNCT
They (two) fell down
[Marra (Heath 1981: 368)]

As well as carrying semantic weight, coverbs in these constructions also have phonological prominence by being the first element and because, in contrast to other

\(^{55}\) where “A” indicates the object belongs to the noun class prefixed with *a-*.  

\(^{56}\) cf. *nayiman*: ‘he went’.
morphemes in the verb, they do not inflect and are not subject to morphophonemic processes. Given these features, a prediction could be made that there are fewer features constraining coverbs in Marra, Alawa and Warndarrang from being transferred into the Kriol lexicon compared with verbs in Gunwinyguan languages. This prediction is shown to be correct by data provided below on non-English based verbs that are attested in Roper Kriol.

4.3 AN OVERVIEW OF NON-ENGLISH BASED VERBS IN KRIOL

I commenced fieldwork for this study in 2010 with years of prior experience as a competent L2 Kriol speaker. As I embarked on fieldwork, my self-assessment of my Kriol abilities was that I had mastered the phonology, lexicon and morphology and that my main area of development was to continue improving my cultural competencies and pragmatics. Thinking I had mastered the largely English-derived lexicon was shortsighted. It was not long into the Marra documentation project that I noticed unfamiliar verbs occurring in Marra texts that were also featuring in the translations provided by Marra consultants. I began to explicitly investigate ‘verbs that don’t come from English’ (as I would refer to them during interviews and elicitation) and was surprised to discover a significant gap in my lexical knowledge: several dozen verbs that I had never heard before that were confidently described to me by speakers of all ages as part of Kriol.

Reflecting on why I learned these verbs so late in acquiring Kriol, it became apparent that I was subject to the unavoidable problem an L2 creole learner or researcher faces when they speak the lexifying language as an L1: bias towards lexemes and structures that occur in the lexifier. An additional difficulty in capturing the influence of verbs from languages other than English in Kriol was the low frequency and specific semantics of many of the verbs. It must also be acknowledged that the data presented below is not complete; my list of non-English based verbs continues to expand at the rate of approximately one per week each time I undertake further fieldwork. With this in mind, the data presented below is an illustration of the previously under-recognised prevalence of non-English based Kriol verbs and does not purport to be a complete analysis.

The focus of this chapter is a set of sixty non-English based verbs in Kriol that are widely known to all or most adults. A smaller set of approximately twenty verbs had a more restricted distribution, usually known only to middle-aged speakers and older (these are discussed in §4.8). Information presented below was gathered through recorded interviews with young Kriol speakers, observation and informal conversations with a
range of Kriol speakers and by checking information against reference materials available for Kriol and each of the local traditional languages as well as my own Marra corpus.

Looking at only the sixty widely known verbs, a quantitative summary of the set of non-English based verbs reveals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of widely-known non-English-based verbs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number occurring in Kriol dictionary</td>
<td>26 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number known to occur in local languages</td>
<td>46 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number occurring as coverbs in Marra and with cognates in other local languages</td>
<td>20 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number occurring as coverbs only in Marra</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number occurring in local languages but not Marra</td>
<td>12 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number with little or no etymological information</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4–1: Quantitative summary of information pertaining to widely-known non-English based Kriol verbs

Etymological information is summarised further in Figure 4–1:

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Figure 4–1: Language of origin of 60 commonest non-English-based verbs

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57 Three Kriol verbs that also occur in Marra are not coverbs in Marra but rather act as nominals: *gumbu* ‘urinate’, *jarlu* ‘arm/lead by the arm’ and *mangumangu* ‘elope(ment)’. While these are further examples of Marra’s potential lexical influence on Kriol, they are not examples of Marran verb complexes contributing uninflecting coverbs to Kriol.
Figure 4–1 shows that over half (34 of 60) of the verbs also occur in Marra. If verbs with unknown etymologies are omitted, then over two-thirds (34 of 49) of the commonest verbs are found to occur in Marra. Of the thirty-four Kriol verbs also found in Marra, the majority (23 out of 34) do not occur only in Marra but also in one or more neighbouring languages. Figure 4–1 shows that where it was possible to determine an etymology, few were not found in Marran languages. There were only nine such verbs. Three – *bogi* ‘bathe’, *guna* ‘defecate’ and *gula* ‘argue’ – are attributable to the pidgin language that originated in New South Wales. The remaining six are derived from other languages of the Roper Region or Top End: *bagai* ‘be relaxed’ (Yolŋu Matha), *baku* ‘vomit’ (Gurindji), *birr* ‘doubt’ (Ngandi, Ritharrŋu/Wägilak), *burdurup* ‘piggyback’ (Nunggubuyu), *nyang* ‘chew’ (Yolŋu Matha) and *nyurr* ‘grumble’ (various languages).

Various sets of non-English-based verbs are discussed in greater detail below, starting with those verbs attested in Marra only (§4.4). Verbs occurring in Marra as well as other languages in the area are discussed in §4.5 followed by a discussion of the remaining verbs: those originating from languages other than Marra (§4.6) and those whose origins are unclear (§4.6.5). Unless otherwise stated, information on the presence of non-English-based verbs in substrate languages was obtained by consulting major sources for each language: Heath’s grammars and companion dictionaries for Marra (1981), Ngandi (1978b), Ritharrŋu/Wägilak (1980c), Warndarrang (1980c) and Nunggubuyu (1982b), Merlan’s grammar of Ngalakgan (1983), Sharpe’s Alawa dictionary (2001a) and also the pan-dialectal Yolŋu Matha dictionary compiled by Zorc (1986).

### 4.4 Common Kriol Verbs Occurring Only in Marra

Of the 60 non-English based verbs identified as widely known by all adults in Ngukurr, eleven were found to have transferred from Marra exclusively. Given that etymologies could be determined for only 49 of the verbs, this represents almost one-quarter of all non-English based verbs, the highest proportion of any language other than English. Furthermore, considering that Marra shares a high proportion of cognates with Warndarrang and to a lesser extent Alawa (54% and 17% respectively, see Harvey 2012), it is even more significant that eleven isolated Marra verbs have transferred directly to Kriol.

These eleven verbs are: *barlai* ‘to be too late, miss something’, *gardaj* ‘grab, scoop’, *gubarl* ‘scavenge’, *gulaj* ‘nod’, *mangala* ‘jump on bandwagon’, *manjal* ‘be physically weak’, *many* ‘walk quickly’, *ngaja* ‘ask for something’, *ngar* ‘have an erection’, *nyal* ‘take sides’ and *waranga* ‘be lost’.
Note that the verb barlai ‘to miss something, be too late’ has a homonym in Kriol meaning ‘to give birth, be born’. I have included barlai in the set of Marra-isolate derived verbs as the ‘miss’ meaning is attested only in Marra. The other meaning is derived from a separate coverb, barla, found in both Marra and Warndarrang.

4.4.1 BARLAI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to be late, miss something.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note also in Kriol: barlai2: lay eggs, give birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kriol Dikshenri</th>
<th>Not found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Commonly known, low frequency. Geographic range unclear. (same as with barlai2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Etymology</th>
<th>Marra: mbarlay- (coverb) ‘to be unsuccessful (e.g. in hunt), to be unable to get’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: barlai: originates from Warndarrang and Marra: barla- (coverb) ‘to be born’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</th>
<th>Alawa: jarl- ‘miss’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warndarrang: yarl-, muy- ‘miss’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunggubuyu: =wajirrbadj ‘miss’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalakgan, Ngandi: ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: badatjitj ‘to miss (e.g. in shooting or playing didjeridu)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barlai is a unique example of a homonymous verb derived from two substrate coverbs, barla- and mbarlay-. Their phonological similarity appears to have resulted in the two lexemes converging into one phonological form in Kriol. Barlai appears to be a low-frequency verb but it was recognised by most young Kriol speakers who were interviewed, as in the example provided in (4.7):

\[(4.7) \quad ai \quad bin \quad barlai \quad det \quad futbul.\]

1SG PST miss the football
I missed the football (e.g. I didn’t take a mark⁵⁸).

Kriol speakers were regularly able to conceptualise barlai₁ and barlai₂ as separate words, even describing them as such during interviews. The apparent low frequency of the verb may explain why it was not previously documented in Kriol, unlike other verbs described below like ngaja and gubarl which are commonly occurring and previously documented.

⁵⁸ A mark is a common term used in Australian Rules football (the dominant sport in Ngukurr) where a player catches a kicked football without it touching the ground.
4.4.2 GARDAJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>grab, snatch, scoop (can refer to other movements that are characterised a 'scoop' hand shape).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Common. Used and known to all speakers. Occurs in Roper Kriol and Barunga Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: gardaj- (coverb) 'to sift (in hands)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents</td>
<td>Nunggubuyu: =warraada- 'to scoop up (something)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in other substrates</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: bat (verb root) 'pick up, grab', dhiṯthun 'to have or gather in one's hands; to have one's hands full of'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngandi: ma- 'to get, to grab, to pick up. Root form: bart.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alawa: gaj- (coverb) 'scoop up with two hands'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngalakgan: murnh- 'to catch, grab hold of, grasp'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warndarrang:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Marra definition of *gardaj* offered by Heath, 'to sift (in hands)' (1981: 449), suggests some semantic difference from the Kriol verb. Kriol speakers gloss *gardaj* as 'grab' or 'snatch', and give prototypical contexts such as scooping up cash after winning a card game or children hurriedly grabbing pieces of fruit at school recess. A key component of many examples provided by young Kriol speakers was to obtain the object hurriedly and/or before someone else. Other attestations of the verb that indicate that this is not a compulsory semantic component, such as this naturally occurring example from a 35-year-old describing the process of collecting *garnaya* 'lily bulbs':

```kriol
(4.8) wen yu gaji im yu sodava garra filimbat la
     when 2SG get 3SG 2SG sort_of FUT feel:TR:PROG LOC
wada, filim, if im raitwan: yu gardaj im.
     water feel:TR if 3SG right:ADJ 2SG get_with_scoop_hand 3SG
```

When you get it, you're sort of feeling for it in the water. (You) feel it, if it's suitable, then you 'gardaj' (scoop/get) it.

[20130509KRIOLrNGUgd01a_00:15:07]

Other examples show *gardaj* can be extended to other events, including:

- Using a ‘bush spoon’ to scoop native honey (sugarbag) out of a log hollow
- Leaning out of a slow-moving vehicle and using your hands to scoop up/collect leaves of a low-growing ironwood tree (to be used to create smoke during ceremony)
- Tapping someone covertly on the middle of their back to gain their attention

---

The Alawa coverb *gaj-* is likely to be cognate with the Marra *gardaj-*, however given that the phonologically-distinct Marra form has transferred to Kriol, I claim that the presence of *gardaj* in Kriol is attributable to Marra.
Across these variable examples and contexts, a significant shared feature is the physical shape of the hand during gardaj events. The gestural or physical component of the verb becomes quite salient when gardaj events are witnessed and Kriol speakers often used the gesture to accompany an oral explanation or description: all gardaj events involve a cupped hand with fingers close together, quickly extending and returning from the body in a swift circular ‘scooping’ motion. It appears that this physical shape and gestural quality is as much a part of the core semantics of the verbs as is the acquisition semantic component. This aligns gardaj with other gesturally iconic substrate verbs found in Kriol described elsewhere in this chapter, such as moi, ngaja, gabai and ngarra. The physical, gestural component of gardaj is also the most obvious commonality between the Marra definition of ‘sift’ offered by Heath and the description of the Kriol verb given here, where in both cases gardaj events involve a movement by a cupped hand with touching fingertips.

Like gubarl (discussed below), gardaj is a common verb in Ngukurr that has transferred from a Marra-isolate coverb and now also occurs in the neighbouring dialect, Barunga Kriol. Like many other verbs described in this chapter, it was not previously listed in the Kriol Dikshenri.

4.4.3 GUBARL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>scavenge, scrounge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>adj. rubbishy; second-hand; discarded. Location: Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Common. Used and known to all speakers in Ngukurr. Also occurs in Barunga Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: gubarl- (coverb) ‘to eat rotten or unhealthy food’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Ngalakgan, Nunggubuyu: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gubarl is a prominent example of a Marra-only verb that is known and used by all Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. It has transferred directly from a Marra coverb which Heath defined as ‘to eat rotten or unhealthy food’. A more recent Marra example comes from Freda Roberts describing the diet of dingoes:

\[(4.9) \text{Wajinja-yinj}a \text{ nirrirri wardabirr ngaba gubarl-gubarl-arlindu} \]
3SG:eat;PRS[REDUP] small goanna and scavenge-[REDUP]-3SG:go;PRS
It eats small lizards and it scavenges

Heath’s definition of gubarl – to eat rotten or unhealthy food – may be too narrow. I suggest it is not an eating verb but rather a getting verb, where the object acquired is
commonly a food source. The Kriol verb has maintained the core semantics of the Marra coverb and is generally translated or glossed as 'scavenge'. However, in Kriol it is often applied to non-food objects which may be an innovation made by Kriol speakers. This usage is attested in Nicholls (2009: 55) taken from an archived 1998 recording with a middle-aged Kriol speaker from Minyerri:

(4.10) ola Binloni-mob bin go gubargubar detmob tjeya
the[PL] placename-COLL PST go scavenge[REDUP] those chair
The Binloni people went scrounging (around for) those chairs. [Nicholls 2009: 55]

Young Kriol speakers also use the verb in the way Heath described for Marra, such as Dwayne Rogers applying it to the feeding behaviour of crows:

(4.11) im laigi gubarl daga from rabishdamp eniweya
3SG like:TR scavenge food from rubbish_dump anywhere
It likes to scavenge food from the rubbish dump (or) anywhere
[DR_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:36:55]

Example 4.11 is taken from a lively extended discussion involving three young Kriol speakers describing the lexeme gubarl. This conversation is transcribed in full in Appendix 9 and demonstrates a range of uses of the verb gubarl, indicating that it is a common verb in Kriol, well-known to young speakers. It suggests semantic extension has occurred in relation with the Marra coverb etymon, although we cannot be sure that Heath had precisely documented and defined gubarl in Marra. In Appendix 9, the following contexts are given as examples of gubarl events:

- crows scavenging at a rubbish dump (or any other location)
- a person scavenging clothing (shirt, trousers) (e.g. finding it somewhere and wearing it)
- a person obtaining a bike by 'scavenging' (e.g. finding it somewhere and using it)
- a person obtaining money by scrounging around for small amounts
- a person obtaining cigarettes or drinks by scavenging or perhaps begging.

In what appears to be a unique and anomalous process, the conversation transcribed in Appendix 9 also reveals a nominalised form, gubarlinga, referring to a person who is a habitual agent of gubarl events. As Dwayne Rogers explains:
This is an unusual example of a non-English-based verb taking derivational morphology to produce a nominalised form. The -\textit{nga} suffix which appears to function as a nominaliser is not attested elsewhere in Kriol or in local traditional languages. There is also an instance (Appendix 9, line 22) in which \textit{gubarl} is used with adjectival suffix -\textit{wan} to form an adjective, in reference to a small amount of money that has been acquired by scavenging.

This data suggests that not only has the Marra-isolate coverb \textit{gubarl} transferred to Kriol and is widely known, Kriol speakers have added further innovations where it is used as a verb (in base form, reduplicated form and with the progressive suffix -\textit{bat}), as an adjective (with the adjectival suffix -\textit{wan}) and as a noun (with the suffix -\textit{nga}). All these forms occur in Appendix 9.

4.4.4 \textit{Gulaj}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>nod, to bow head, make an ‘agreement’ gesture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Common. Used and known to all speakers. Roper Kriol only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: \textit{gulaj} (coverb): ‘to shake head slightly; to point (with lower lip)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Semantic equivalents in other substrates | Yolŋu Matha: \textit{bungu yun} ‘agree, nod head in agreement’, \textit{dhapul’yun} ‘nod in agreement move, wriggle’  
Nunggubuyu: \textit{=andarra}: ‘to nod (in agreement), to signal assent; to shake, quiver.’  
Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Ngalakgan: ? |

Like \textit{gardaj} (see §4.4.2), \textit{gulaj} is a coverb documented only in Marra that has transferred directly into Kriol. Also similar to \textit{gardaj}, as well as describing and event or action, \textit{gulaj} has an iconic gestural component: a confident nod or bow of the head, quite sharply downward, usually done just once. Note that the gestural quality is slightly different to how Australian English speakers nod, which is often a repeated movement and is equally up and down, not primarily downward, as in \textit{gulaj}.

A major communicative function of \textit{gulaj} is to indicate acceptance, agreement and/or permission, similar to the English ‘nod’. However, the type of nodding it denotes is generally not used in conversation, as in English, to indicate empathy or understanding and signal to a speaker to continue speaking.
Note that Heath’s definition differs slightly: to shake head slightly or point with lower lip. This definition does not directly correlate with how Kriol speakers use and define *gulaj*. Kamahi Murrungun illustrated one particular usage of *gulaj* with a hypothetical scenario and dialogue:

(4.13) "Gu aski det gel ba main ja."
go ask:TR the girl for me there
"Go proposition that girl there on my behalf"

Gu ja, aski im, kambek na gen, "wani na?"
go there ask:TR 3SG return then JOCULAR what now
(He) goes there, (he) asks her, (he) comes back. (And I say) "Well, what?"

"wani imin tok?"
what 3SG:PST talk
"What did she say?"

"Imin gulaj ba yu."
3SG:PST nod for 2SG
"She nodded for you."

[KM_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:37:50]

Yet Heath’s definition is not communicative but solely gestural. Young Kriol speakers did not describe *gulaj* in purely gestural terms, but rather as a communication verb accompanied by an iconic gestural component. Similarly, an example of a multilingual Alawa elder using the verb with Kriol speaking teenagers shows him using it with its communicative function, telling them to verbalise their agreement/understanding, not just indicate through gesture:

(4.14) *Nomo gulaj*, like garn-gulugulu, you say "yes". 
NEG nod like lizard_sp. you say yes.
Don’t nod, like a ‘ta-ta lizard’, you say “yes”.

[20050429ALAWAsrMinNgd_00:02:07]

This suggests that *gulaj* may have had a communicative function in Marra that was not captured in Heath’s Marra definition. However, the semantic equivalents documented for Yolngu Matha and Nunggubuyu (see above) do identify the agreement component of the verb. This suggests that this gesture, its communicative function and verbs that denote it, occur pan-linguistically across multiple Aboriginal languages. Its persistence in Kriol (as a distinct gesture and verb) is an example of connection to pre-contact patterns of communication and indicates the maintenance of communication norms that are distinctly Aboriginal. The form itself, *gulaj*, is common and appears to have transferred directly from Marra.
### 4.4.5 MANGALA

| **English gloss** | ‘jump on bandwagon’, join in or copy an activity. Cf. jal. |
| **Kriol Dikshenri** | Not found |
| **Distribution** | Common. Used and known to all speakers. Geographic distribution not known. |
| **Etymology** | Marra: ‘follow or mimic’ (Harney and Elkin 1949: 166) |
| **Semantic equivalents in other substrates** | See also Nunggubuyu compound verb -mangala-lha- ‘to take sides (in a fight)’ (see nyal, §4.4.10) but mangala does not have any other function without the particle -lha-. |

Despite being well-known to most or all Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, mangala has eluded linguists until now. It appears that its only published attestation in Marra or Kriol is in a 1949 collection of traditional stories, songs and verse published by former patrol officer Bill Harney (mentioned briefly in §2.4.3) and anthropologist, A.P. Elkin. A short verse *The Jabiru and the Brolga*, pertaining to the "Mara tribe", reads as follows:

> Mungala mungala kud jen dee
> Children laugh and dance with glee,
> Worama beats his sticks and then
> Sings this song of the Brolga men. (Harney and Elkin 1949: 122)

Their glossary defines “mungala” as “follow or mimic” (Harney and Elkin 1949: 166), broadly matching the semantics of the Kriol verb (see table above). Further evidence of the Marra origins of mangala occurred during natural conversation recorded during this study, when Topsy Numamurdirdi shooed a dog who had attempted to participate in the activity she was involved in:

> (4.15) **Ja! Mangala-wuyanga ngana nginya**
> Shoo! copy-3SG:(-jinji);PST;PUNCT the[F] this[F]
> Shoo! This (dog) is copying me.

In (4.15), mangala occurs as an uninflecting, semantically-influential coverb as with most of the other Marra-derived verbs described in this chapter.

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60 Kudjendee (Kudjendi) is glossed by Harney and Elkin as “all people about” (1949: 166) but the origin of this term is not clear.
The semantics of *mangala* as used by contemporary Kriol speakers requires more careful description. Harney and Elkins and example 4.15 above gloss *mangala* as ‘copy’, ‘follow’ or ‘mimic’. Yet another non-English based verb, *jal*, is also glossed as copy or imitate. *Jal* generally refers to very short copy-events such as repeating a word or sentence, or copying a single movement. *Jal* events are genuine imitations, where the subject attempts to exactly copy the original doer. It is also a neutral verb. On the other hand, *mangala* has a negative connotation, where the person who is subjected to the copying or mimicking does not particularly want it and certainly did not ask for it. When a subject performs a *mangala* action, they do not want to exactly replicate the action of another; rather they desire to be doing the same thing that the other person is doing. *Mangala* also refers to activities that are more temporally or physically significant, such as a journey that may last several hours. These features are exemplified by Kamahl Murrungun’s description of *mangala*:

(4.16)  
\[\text{Wen } yu \ wandi \ gu \ fishing \ en \ beibimo \ hambag}  
\text{when} \ 2SG \ \text{want:TR} \ \text{go} \ \text{fishing} \ \text{and} \ \text{baby:COLL} \ \text{pester}  
\text{’aa stop mangalabat na,} \ yumo \ jidan \ wampleis  
\text{ah stop copy:PROG now} \ 2PL \ \text{sit/be} \ \text{same_location}  
\text{bambai mela nogud then} \ yumob \ maidi \ stat \ wokbekbat  
\text{after} \ 1PLEXCL \ \text{bad then} \ 2PL \ \text{maybe start walk_back:PROG}  
\text{When you want to go fishing and young children pester (and you say): “Aahh, stop mangala-ing already. You guys stay here otherwise we’ll be upset then you guys might have to start walking back”}\.

With *mangala* widely known among young Kriol speakers it is perhaps surprising that it has eluded previous description in either Marra or Kriol. It should be noted that the form occurs in the Nunggubuyu compound verb -*mangala-lha* (where the -*lha*- stem means ’stand’) but *mangala-lha* carries the same meaning as the verb *nyal* that occurs in Marra and Kriol: to take sides in a fight (see §4.4.10). Being attested only in Marra and not previously documented in Kriol indicates again that the influence of Marra on Kriol and the prevalence of non-English based verbs in Kriol has previously been under-described.
4.4.6 MANJAL

| **English gloss** | be physically weak (cf. *bilk*), malnourished, listless |
| **Kriol Dikshenri** | Not found |
| **Distribution** | Common. Used and known to most or all speakers. Geographic distribution not known. |
| **Etymology** | Marra: *manjal-* (coverb): to get soft (Heath 1981: 470), to be ‘wrinkled with age’ (Hale 1959: 127) |
| **Semantic equivalents in other substrates** | Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *nyimbil’yun* ‘be weak’
Nunggubuyu: =*wirrgirra-* (v.) ‘to be skinny, to be underfed, in poor condition’, *ninig* (adj.) ‘soft (substance); loose-jointed (person, animal)’, =*ninima-* (inchoative verb form), =*niniga-* (factitive verb form), *bilwilwiluj* (adj.) ‘weak (person or object); pliant, bending.’
Alawa: (adv.) *balbalbi* ‘slow(ly), soft(ly), weak(ly), quiet(ly), a little bit. Sense of weakness, low or slow.’ Also *bilk-* (coverb): see §4.5.1
Warndarrang: *bilk-* (coverb): see §4.5.1
Ngandi, Ngalakgan: ? |

As suggested above, *manjal* is semantically close to the verb *bilk*. While there are some overlapping semantics, *manjal* appears to relate primarily to physical states (e.g. an antonym of ‘strong’), whereas *bilk* (see §4.5.1) refers as much to a mental state as to a physical state (synonymous with the Aboriginal English sense of ‘weak’ which can mean unenthusiastic). One young woman described *manjal* as:

(4.17)  
Yu  wik.  Yu  duwum eberrijing  sleekwei  
2SG  weak  2SG  do:TR  everything  slack:ADV  
You’re weak. You’re doing everything slackly.

It appears to be known by most or all young adult Kriol speakers in Ngukurr and is likely to have transferred from the homophonous coverb attested only in Marra. Note though the variation in Marra definitions: Heath defined the coverb as ‘to get soft’, while Hale’s fieldnotes gloss it as referring to becoming wrinkled with age:

(4.18)  
Manyjal-ngamanji  
wrinkled_with_age-1SG:do;PRS  
I’m wrinkled with age.

(Hale 1959: 127, glossing added)

The definitions given by Heath and Hale are semantically related to having a physically weak disposition (cf. *bilg* ‘be tired’), thereby corresponding with Kriol definitions provided by Kriol speakers.
4.4.7 MANY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English gloss</strong></th>
<th>walk quickly, walk with intent, march, stride</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>Not found</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution**

Common. Used and known to most or all speakers. Geographic distribution not known.

**Etymology**

Marra: *many*- (coverb): to walk quickly

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Yolŋu Matha (Gupapuyŋu): *bunjirr'marama* 'move (run, drive) fast march (like goose-step), move with knees high'

Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Ngalakgan: ? Nunggubuyu: no semantic equivalent, but see *manyal/manyal* (adj.) 'walking in swaggering fashion'

This verb is generally defined in Kriol as *'wok garri spid'* (walk quickly, lit: walk with speed). I learned this verb inadvertently after asking two young Kriol speaking women about a different non-English based verb, *gudid* 'convey' (described in §4.5.4). One of the young women expanded her description of *gudid* by using *many-many* to provide further context. This example also illustrates how some of the verbs described in this chapter were only revealed to me after several years of speaking the language:

(4.19) "a yu lu im tharrai im gudid mijel
ah 2SG luk 3SG over_there 3SG carry REFL
im daga." (laugh) Im garramap then indit, im daga,
3SG food 3SG carry then TAG 3SG food
en many-many olawei (laugh)
and walk_quickly[REDUP] all_the_way

"ah, look at him/her over there, s/he's carrying his/her food". S/he carries it up then, doesn't s/he, ... his/her food, and 'power walks' the whole way.

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd01a.wav_00:22:41]

In Marra documentation, *many* is attested in Heath’s Marra dictionary as a coverb with a virtually identical definition, indicating direct transfer from Marra to Kriol.

4.4.8 NGAJA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English gloss</strong></th>
<th>ask for something, demand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>vt. beg; plead; ask for; grab. ngaja la yu = budumat binga [sic] bla yu. Location: Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution**

Very common. Used by most or all speakers. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.

**Etymology**

Marra: *ngaja* (particle): ‘give me!’, (coverb): to ask (for stg), to request

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Nunggubuyu: *dhangaya* ‘to request something from (person)’, *marang=dhangaya* ‘to hold hand out (as in begging)’. Yolŋu Matha: *bal’yun* 'beg, ask for, cadge, "bludge”' Alawa, Ngandi: ? Warndarrang: *ngirl* - (coverb): ‘to inquire of’ Ngalakgan: *gangah-wu* ‘to ask someone, make a request of’
Ngaja is a high frequency verb with a meaning distinct from the English-derived verb askim 'ask'. Ngaja, unlike askim, is not a verb of enquiry, but a request or demand for the receipt of goods, tied to the prevalence of kin-based demand-sharing in communities like Ngukurr. Demand-sharing is a cultural-practice that on the surface level results in distribution of goods and resources but at a deeper level results in the ongoing maintenance of kinship and community (see Peterson 1993). The continuation of the activity, and having it encoded with a specific verb, ngaja, is an indicator of Kriol speakers maintaining a key cultural practice pre-dating European contact.

As with a number of other verbs described in this chapter, ngaja is accompanied by an iconic gesture that always complemented an oral definition when Kriol speakers were asked about the verb. The gesture features an open hand, angled slightly downwards towards the requestee (shown in Figure 5–14 in the following chapter).

In Marra, Heath lists ngaja as both a particle and a coverb. The particle usage is attested in Hale's fieldnotes:

(4.20) Baba ngaja mama
eBr give_it food
Br[other], give me tucker

(Hale 1959: 191, glossing added)

Note though that the common 'give' verb in Marra is an inflecting verb with the root – wanani. The example Heath gives of ngaja as a coverb (example 4.21) is accompanied by the noun murrji 'hand', indicating the iconicity of the gesture shown in Figure 5–14 that accompanies the verb:

(4.21) Murrji ngaja-ngama
hand ask_for-1SG:do;PST;PUNCT
I asked with my hands (i.e. by holding one hand out and turning it palm up, in sign language).

(Heath 1981: 480, glossing added)

4.4.9 NGAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>have an erection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>v. for a penis to become erect. Location: Ngukurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Common. Used and known to most or all speakers. Geographic distribution unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: ngar- (coverb): to have erect penis (Heath 1981: 482)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wagilak, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Ngalakganyu, Nunggubuyu: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This verb was not carefully analysed due to it referring to a slightly taboo topic, but it appears to be widely known and used. It occurs in Hale’s documentation (example 4.21) and subsequently Heath’s dictionary.

(4.22) *Ngar-ngayanga*

have erection-1SG: (-jinji); PST; PUNCT
I have an erection

(Hale 1959: 21, Hale’s translation, glossing added)

While *ngar* is only attested in Marra among the original languages of the region, it is possible that if it occurs in Alawa, it may not have been recorded because the only person to document the language in detail is female and may not have been able to elicit detailed material referring to male sexuality.

### 4.4.10 *Nyal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English gloss</strong></th>
<th><em>take sides and join in (in a fight or dispute); help someone in a fight; to ‘take part’ (common gloss used by Kriol speakers)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Very common. Used and known to most or all speakers. Also occurs in Barunga Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>nyal-</em> (coverb): to support (someone, in a dispute or fight) (Heath 1981: 478)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Semantic equivalents in other substrates** | Nunggubuyu: -*mangala-lha-* (compound verb): ‘to take sides (in fight), to join in the fray’  
Ritharrŋu/Wägilak, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Ngalakgan: ? |

*Nyal* is commonly glossed by Kriol speakers as ‘take part’. It refers to the action of taking sides with someone in a dispute or fight and becoming a co-participant. *Nyal* categorises another event embedded in local cultural practices, where solidarity among family members is strong and expected and can occasionally lead to public feuding divided along extended family lines. Among local languages, *nyal* is attested only in Marra, exemplified by the following examples documented by Hale:

(4.23) *gu-nangani nyal-an.gayi*

NEG-M:who support_in_fight-3SG>1SG: (-ganji); PST; POT
No-one was there to be my partner (in the fight).

(Hale 1959: 350, Hale’s translation, glossing added)

---

61 In the audio recording, Dulu (the Marra speaker) is audibly amused and embarrassed while giving this and related examples.
(4.24) **Nyal-an.gay**  
nya-ngarri-ni  
support_in_fight-3SG>1SG:(ganji);FUT  
M[OBL]-fight-PURP  
He'll take my side in the fight.

(Hale 1959: 351, Hale’s translation, glossing added)

The semantics of the Kriol verb compared to Heath’s Marra definition and Hale’s Marra examples appear to be little changed as demonstrated by the following examples:

(4.25) "**ei bala, nyal la im ja... im misal**"

Hey poor_thing support_in_fight LOC 3SG there 3SG solo

"Hey poor guy, go help him fight there, he’s on his own!"

[KM_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:00:59:22]

(4.26) **en sometimes thei gu pek na wan person**

and sometimes 3PL go gang_up LOC one person  
**en na ja sambidi jingat "ei yumo nyal**  
and then there someone shout hey 2PL support_in_fight  
**la im du en..."**  
LOC 3SG too and…

And sometimes they go and gang up on one person and then someone calls out:  
"hey you guys help him fight too and.."

[DR_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:00:59:23]

Evidence from Kriol speakers indicates that **nyal** is widely known not only in Roper Kriol but extends into at least the neighbouring Barunga dialect. This makes **nyal** one of several Marra coverbs that have not only transferred into Roper Kriol but subsequently spread to neighbouring varieties.

---

62 I became aware that the geographic distribution of **nyal** extends beyond Roper Kriol via participation in several training sessions involving Kriol-English interpreters from various communities. In interpreter training, **nyal** would regularly feature in discussions relating to the principle of impartiality in interpreting work.
### 4.4.11 Waranga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to be lost, disorientated, ‘draw a blank’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Common in Roper Kriol. No information on wider distribution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See also:
Ngandi: *warakga-dhu*- ‘to forget, to leave behind, to lose’ (Heath 1982b: 26)
Tiwi: *waranga* ‘stoned’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warndarrang, Alawa: ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalakgan: <em>walpwalp</em>- ‘get lost’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunggubuyu: =<em>anibi</em> ‘to get lost, to be/become lost or forgotten’, see also =<em>warrangga</em>- ‘to look (around), to look (at something)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: <em>wiḏi’yu</em>- ‘to become lost’, <em>moma</em>- ‘forget, lose, misunderstand’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Waranga* is the eighth verb described in this section that was not previously listed in the Kriol Dikshenri. It was found to be widely known among Kriol speakers, and apparently frequently used given its appearance in natural conversation: example 4.27 is taken from one of the ethnobiology interviews described in Chapter 7, arising when an interviewee could not think of any more lizard taxa:

(4.27) mi **waranga** na ba lisid

1SG be_lost now for lizard

I’m lost now for lizards (i.e. I can’t recall any more types of lizard).

The prototypical meaning of *waranga* differs slightly from example (4.27). It relates to being physically lost or unsure of where to go, essentially a physical manifestation of the cognitive meaning. This was demonstrated by two young Kriol speakers in a short impromptu video produced to accompany some of the verbs described in this chapter (Ngukurr Language Centre 2013b).

In terms of its etymology, *waranga* does not occur in Heath’s grammar, but several examples predate Heath’s work, documented by Ken Hale and his informant Dulu:

(4.28) **waranga-nganga**

be_lost-1SG:go:PST;PUNCT

I’ve been bush[ed], lost.\(^{63}\)

---

\(^{63}\) *bushed* is an adjective in Australian/NZ English meaning ‘lost’.
It is unclear why Heath, who appears to have utilised Hale’s materials, did not incorporate *waranga* into his dictionary when Hale’s documentation provides clear evidence that *waranga* is a Marra coverb that has transferred to Kriol.\(^{64}\)

### 4.5 Common Kriol verbs occurring in Marra and other regional languages

Section 4.4 described eleven Marra coverbs that were not attested in any other languages prior to their transfer to Kriol where they are now widely known among all adults. This section describes a further twenty-three Kriol verbs that occur in Marra but in these instances they are known to have shared etymologies, occurring in other traditional languages in addition to Marra. There is insufficient space to describe each verb individually as was done in the previous section. Instead, core information is summarised in Table 4–2. A selection of ten verbs are then described in detail while information pertaining to the remaining thirteen verbs is provided in Appendix 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kriol verb</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>in Lee (2004)</th>
<th>Etymology (exact form)</th>
<th>Possible/likely etymologies</th>
<th>Non-cognates</th>
<th>No info found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>bal</em></td>
<td>pound</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Warn.</td>
<td>Alawa, Nung, Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td>Ngal, Ngandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bardap</em></td>
<td>react in surprise</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra</td>
<td>Alawa, Warn., Yolŋu Matha, Nung.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ngandi, Ngal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bilk</em></td>
<td>be slack, tired</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa, Warn.</td>
<td>Rith./Wäg., Nung, Ngandi Ngal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{64}\) Two Kriol speakers revealed that Tiwi speakers use *waranga* to refer to being stoned (under the influence of marijuana) but considered it to be a separate lexeme with separate etymology.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>gil</code></td>
<td>crawl</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Warn., Alawa</td>
<td>Ngal.</td>
<td>Nung., Rith./Wäg., Ngandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>gululu</code></td>
<td>thunder</td>
<td>yes (but incom-</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa</td>
<td>Nung.</td>
<td>Ngal. (but incomplete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>gumbu</code></td>
<td>urinate</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Pama-Nyungan languages</td>
<td>Alawa, Warn., Nung., Ngali, Rith./Wäg., Ngandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>jalk</code></td>
<td>poke</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Warn., Nung.</td>
<td>Alawa</td>
<td>Rith./Wäg., Ngandi, Ngali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>jarlu</code></td>
<td>lead by hand</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Alawa, Marra</td>
<td>Nung., Warn., Ngal., Ngal., Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>murnim</code></td>
<td>flicker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa, Ngandi</td>
<td>Warn., Ngali, Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`munyurr</td>
<td>refine</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Nung., Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td>Alawa, Warn., Ngali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ngangga</code></td>
<td>remove from burrow</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Nung., Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td>Alawa, Warn., Ngali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ngarra</code></td>
<td>Peep</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra</td>
<td>Alawa, Warn., Nung., Ngandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ngayap</code></td>
<td>be silent</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Warn.</td>
<td>Alawa, Ngali, Nung.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>nyip</code></td>
<td>draw back</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa, Warn., Ngali, Rith./Wäg., Ngandi</td>
<td>Nung.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>warl</code></td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Ngali</td>
<td>Alawa, Ngandi, Warn., Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>yalala</code></td>
<td>be pleased</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Marra, Ngali</td>
<td>Nung.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>yarryarr</code></td>
<td>Scatter</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa, Warn., Ngali, Rith./Wäg., Ngandi, Nung?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4–2: Etymologies of Kriol verbs derived from Marra and additional languages
Of the twenty-three verbs listed in Table 4–2, twenty occur in Marra as coverbs. The remaining three – *gumbu* 'urinate', *jarlu* 'lead by hand' and *mangumangu* 'elope' – occur in Marra as nominals. Ten of the Kriol verbs listed above are found in exactly the same form as coverbs in two or more Marran languages. Again, this suggests a correlation between uninflecting, semantically-salient coverbs found in verb complexes in Marran languages and the occurrence of non-English based verbs in the Kriol lexicon. Note also that of the verbs listed in Table 4–2 less than half were documented in the Kriol *Dikshenri*.

The ten verbs described in further detail below were selected primarily because of the depth of information available regarding their etymologies and data exemplifying their semantics and use in both Marra and Kriol. They cover a range of variables, including verbs that were and were not previously documented in Kriol, verbs that are derived only from Marran languages and others with more diverse etymologies (e.g. *di*, *dinggal*, *gumbu*, *jalk*) and one that was derived from a nominal rather than a coverb (*gumbu*).

### 4.5.1 Bilk

| English gloss | to feel slack, tired, to be lacking in energy or enthusiasm. Cf. 'weak' in Aboriginal English. |
| Kriol Dikshenri | Not found. |
| Distribution | Commonly known. Some young speakers reported not using it. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol. |
| Etymology | Marra: *bilg*-(coverb) 'to become weak'. Alawa: *belg*-(coverb) 'tire', *bilg*-(coverb) 'weak, can’t walk ... prob. same [as *belg*]'. Warndarrang: *bilg*-(coverb) 'to be weak, feeble'. |
| Semantic equivalents in other substrates | Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *maybuma* 'tired of doing', *yakurr’yun* 'be tired, sleepy' Nunggubuyu: =*yalngawi* 'to be/become tired', *yarr=wurrwurlha*-'to feel tired' Ngandi: *gorkgogor-dhu* -(v.intr.) 'to be tired' Ngalakgan: *gajarh*-(v.) 'to be tired' |

As described in §4.4.6, *bilk* (*bilg* in Marra orthography) is a near synonym to an exclusively Marra-derived verb *manjal* with both terms often translated as 'weak' or 'slack' by Kriol speakers. The main semantic difference between the two seems to be that *bilk* can refer to a primarily emotional state subsequently causing a physical response, whereas *manjal* primarily refers to a physical state (often creating a secondary emotional response).
Examples of primarily emotional uses of *bilk* include being unenthusiastic to participate or join in an event or conversation because of a negative attitude towards the person(s) or event or *bilk* can also be used to refer to a lacklustre or foreboding feeling associated with intuitions that a relative has passed away. *Manjal* appears to refer more specifically to a physical state of having no energy, although *bilk* can have this meaning too, as suggested by documentation by Ken Hale:

(4.30) \textit{gu-bilk-ngamayi}  
\text{NEG-be_tired-1SG:do;PRS;POT}  
I’m not tired.  
(Hale 1959: 109, Hale’s translation, glossing added)

Fifty years later, I recorded a spontaneous example of *bilk* as a Marra coverb with a physical meaning, when the welfare of an elderly Marra speaker was enquired of:

(4.31) \textit{jabay guda ngi? ngarndal bilg-nima?}  
maybe finish TAG mouth be_tired-2SG:do;PST;PUNCT  
That might be enough, do you think? Did you get tired of talking?

(FR_20110714MARRAgroupNMGd02a_00:11:10)

The etymological information provided above shows that *bilg* is a coverb which occurs in all three Marran languages and is not attested in other languages, indicating that its common occurrence in Kriol is a direct result of transfer from this coverb. Being a common verb in Roper Kriol, it seems surprising that *bilg* has not been documented in Kriol until now. Young Kriol speakers easily provided examples of its usage, including metaphysical aspects of its meaning:

(4.32) \textit{“mi bilk dijan iya” mi nagap, mi taid, garra abu’ res.}  
1SG be_tired this here 1SG tired, 1SG tired FUT have rest  
... or \textit{o femili pasawei yu wik yuno.}  
(We say) ”I’m ‘bilk’, I am”: (it means) I’m ‘knocked up’, I’m tired, gotta have a rest’. ... or (when) a family member passes away (and) you (feel) weak, you know.

(CD_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:28:12)
4.5.2  *Di*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English gloss</strong></th>
<th>to delouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Common. Restricted to Roper Kriol.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Etymology**

Marra: *di-* (coverb) 'to remove lice (from someone)' (Heath 1981: 446)
Warndarrang: *di-* (coverb) 'to break off claws (e.g. of crab)' (Heath 1980a: 129)
Yolŋu Matha: *de'yun* (v.intr.) 'itch, be itchy' (v.tr) 'pinch, tickle, remove lice' (Zorc 1986: 55) cf: Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *gidiyun* 'scratch'

See also:
Ngandi: *deyhdhu-* 'to scratch (lightly)'
Alawa: *dird-* (coverb): 'pick up, get seeds'

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**
Nunggubuyu, Ngalakgan: ?

Of the definitions given in various languages above, the semantics of *di* (commonly reduplicated as *didi*) in Kriol are most closely aligned with the definition of the Marra coverb. The event it refers to – the removal of head lice and eggs – is ubiquitous in remote Aboriginal communities, described elegantly by Trigger (1981) who relays that participants find it "enjoyable, relaxing and intimate, and it is much indulged in" (ibid: 64). It is an activity usually undertaken by women, typified by a woman laying her head in a close relative's lap as they dutifully remove lice and eggs from their scalp, all while casual activities and social interactions (chatting, gossiping, kids playing etc.) proceed undisturbed. At other times, it is an action performed on oneself, as reflected in this Marra example:

(4.33)  *di-ngaganjiyi-rlana*

    delouse-1SG>3SG:{-ganji}i;PRS-REFL
    I’m killing my lice. (Lit: I’m delousing myself)

(Heath 1981: 446)

And this parallel spontaneous Kriol example, where my enquiry about the verb coincided with the young woman incidentally carrying out the act:

(4.34)  *mi  didibat  mijel  na!*  (laugh)

    1SG  delouse[REDUP]:PROG  REFL  now
    I’m getting rid of my head lice now! (Lit: I’m delousing myself now!)

---

65  A Kriol speaker from Bulman (Barunga dialect) said they would not use *di* but would say *kilimbat dort* 'hitting lice' (*dort* occurs in Dalabon and Bininj Gunwok) or *kilimbat hed* 'hitting head' (reminiscent of the term 'head cracking' used by Trigger (1981)).
While cognates of this verb occur in several languages, the form and semantics are most similar to Marra, hence it can be proposed that *di* transferred primarily from Marra with reinforcement from speakers of other languages. It is also previously unattested in Kriol documentation despite being common and known to all Kriol speakers.

### 4.5.3 Dinggal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to limp, walk unevenly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution**

Very common. Occurs in Barunga Kriol and Roper Kriol.

**Etymology**


Alawa: *dinggal* (coverb): ‘be lame’

Ngandi: *dhingh-galin-du* ‘to have or put one’s foot on top’; *dhingh-ngalh-du* ‘to go up on one’s foot, to step up onto something’ (both examples are verb roots with incorporated noun: *dhingh* ‘foot’)

See also: Marra and Warndarrang: *dinggarldinggarl* (noun): plant name: *Tribulus cistoides* – see below.

Ritharr̪ŋu/Wägilak: *dhil'yun* ‘be unable to walk’

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Ngalakgan, Nunggubuyu: ?

A common and widely known verb, *dinggal* is semantically closely related to the English ‘limp’ but can more broadly refer to simply walking unevenly or unsteadily. It was known to all Kriol speakers I consulted, e.g.:

(4.35) GeD: wen yu hop hop la
when 2SG hop[REDUP] thus
When you hop, like so.

PD: yea wen yu kripul
yes when 2SG disabled
Yeah, when you’ve got a disability.

The etymology of *dinggal* is less categorical. Heath did not document it as a coverb in Marra or Warndarrang, while Sharpe did for Alawa (2001a: 24) and Singer’s revision of Heath’s Marra dictionary also included it. Hale’s Marra documentation has a nominal, *wugudmin*, (1959: 145) translated as ‘limp’ but this does not appear in subsequent Marra sources. Hale also documented *dinggaldinggal* with the gloss ‘sore foot’ (1959: 413) but this appears to have also been overlooked by Heath as well, possibly because the
example occurs among plant-themed data and adjacent to examples featuring a plant of the same name.

Indeed, a key part of the etymological puzzle is the plant *Tribulus cistoides* ‘puncture vine’ or ‘caltrop’, called *dinggarldinggarl* in Marra and Warndarrang. This weed is a small ground creeper most notable for barbed woody fruit that are regularly found embedded in feet, shoes and tyres. Anyone inadvertently stepping on the barbed fruit will inevitably hobble (i.e. *dinggal*), but there is no evidence that *dinggarldinggarl* is used in Kriol to refer to this plant.

The other language featuring in the etymology of *dinggal* is Ngandi which, as previously described, does not have coverb structures like Marran languages, but does regularly incorporate nouns into verb complexes. One such incorporated noun is *dhingh* - ‘foot’ (c.f. *gu-dheng* ‘foot’), and Heath lists a verb root featuring this incorporated noun, *dhingh-galin-dhu*, defined as ‘to have or put one’s foot on top’. This carries some semantic similarities to the Kriol *dinggal* and furthermore contains a sequence phonologically identical to the Kriol form *dinggal* once Kriol phonology is applied to it.

While the Ngandi example and the plant name makes the etymology of *dinggal* difficult to determine precisely, it is clear that Marra and other Marran languages have played a role in its transfer to Kriol.

### 4.5.4 GUDID

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>carry along, convey, also retrieve, “go and grab it”, carry something back.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Diksheni</td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Widely known. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: <em>gudid</em> (coverb): ‘to carry slung over shoulder’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alawa: <em>gudid</em> (coverb): ‘carry on or from the shoulder’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warndarrang: <em>gudid</em> (coverb): ‘to carry, convey’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equivalents</td>
<td>Ngandi: <em>birdey-dha</em> ‘to carry on shoulders’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in other</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: <em>bidiyun</em> ‘carry (in dillybag) hung around shoulder’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substrates</td>
<td><em>dhubukun</em> ‘carry over the shoulders or on the back’, <em>gäma</em> ‘carry (in hand), bring, take (along), miŋgirr’yun’ carry under one’s arm (ina a dillybag whose strap is strung over the shoulder).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngalakgan: several carry verbs, none cognate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nunggubuyu: numerous carry verbs, none cognate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with numerous other verbs in this section, *gudid* occurs as a coverb in multiple Marran languages and has subsequently transferred into Kriol. A Marra example is given below:

(4.36) *dad-bilangari* | *guda*
tie-up-3PL>3SG:(-bilangari):PST:CONT | that’s_all
*gudid-gudid-bilanji* | *nana nanggaya budalarr*

They’d tie it up, and then they’d carry the firestick.

(FN_20101214MARRAgroupNUMgd03a_00:01:05)

Young Kriol speakers often define *gudid* with the general carrying verb, *garramap* ’carry’, but were able to distinguish the two verbs. Examples were given relating to a third party bringing a baby to its mother, or someone carrying food or a meal:

(4.37) *ai dali Maiya ba gu gudid mijel det beibi ja,*
hey tell:TR [name] to go carry REFL that baby there
*bringimap im dijei.*
bring:TR:up 3SG this_way
Or I tell Mia to go ”*gudi*d yourself that baby here, bring him here“, I say.

[DR_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd01a.wav_00:22:23]

(4.38) ”*yu lu im tharrai, im gudid mijel im daga*”
2SG luk 3SG over_there 3SG carry REFL 3SG food
“look at him/her over there, s/he’s carrying his/her food”.

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd01a.wav_00:22:40]

Curiously, these (and several other) Kriol examples have the reflexive/reciprocal pronoun *mijel* accompanying the verb *gudid*. It seems as though *gudid mijel* means ’to pick up/retrieve something and secure possession of it’ and is apparently often perceived as a reflexive action by Kriol speakers. It can be viewed negatively as an act of selfishly or inappropriately obtaining an object, as in:

(4.39) ”*ei gaja, imin jas gaman en gudid mijel main het!”*
hey damn 3SG:PST just come and carry REFL my hat
“goddammit, s/he just came and took off with my hat!”

[DR_20120308KRIOLdrkmNGUgd01a.wav_00:25:39]

Again, this verb was not previously recognised in Kriol documentation but occurs in the three Marran languages.
4.5.5 GULULU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to thunder, rumble (e.g. stomach grumbling)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>n. upset stomach; stomach with diarhoea [sic]. Location: Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Widely known. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: <em>gululu</em>- (coverb): 'to thunder'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alawa: <em>gululu</em>- (coverb): 'thundering, rumbling'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See also: Nunggubuyu: =<em>ngurruruwa</em>- '(thundercloud, motor, etc.) to make rumbling or roaring sound'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents</td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak, Yölŋu Matha: <em>murrun/ murryun</em> (v.) 'to growl' (Heath 1980c) 'rumble, make a low rumbling noise (thunder, tractor in distance, didgeridoo) rev (of engine), roar' (Zorc 1986) Ngalakgan: <em>marlun</em> (n.) 'thunder', <em>rdurdh</em> (v.) 'to thunder'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kriol verb *gululu* occurs in Marra and Alawa as an uninflecting coverb and in each language carries the meaning ‘thunder’. In Kriol and Alawa (presumably also Marra) it can extend to non-weather events characterised by a rumbling, internal noise such as a hungry belly or running engine. Examples 4.40 and 4.41 are Marra examples documented over half a century apart:

(4.40) *gu-burr-ngabilingayi gana gululu-wama*

I don’t like it when it thunders.

(Hale 1959: 302, Hale’s translation, glossing added)

(4.41) *gululu-wumindini:::; gana rang-bulganyi gaya warriya poor_thing*

There was a lot of thunder, it struck them there, poor things.

(20120307MARRAmtNGUgd02a_00:02:52)

Evidence from young Kriol speakers suggests that the most salient meaning of *gululu* is in reference to a hungry, grumbling stomach. Across several interviews, this was usually the first sense that was recalled, such as this illustrative example:

(4.42) “*Ei mi gululu binji dijan iya. Animin dagat ol hey 1SG rumble stomach this here 1SG:NEG:PST eat all dei, mi gululu binji. Im jingatjingat main binji.”*

“Hey, my stomach is grumbling. I haven’t eaten all day. My stomach is grumbling. My stomach is crying out.”

[DR_20110629KRIOLdrkmcdNGUgd01a_00:38:39]
The sense relating to thunder was still widely known, but was usually secondary, indicating some shift occurring. Nevertheless, **gululu** is a further example of a coverb transferring directly from Marran languages to Kriol, possibly reinforced by the Nunggubuyu verb root –*ngurruruwa*- which is phonologically similar to the Marra/Alawa coverb, if not cognate.

### 4.5.6 **GUMBU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>urinate, piss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>n. urine. Location: Ngukurr vi. urinate. Imin gumbu mijelb. He wet himself. Location: Ngukurr as <em>kumbo</em>: n. urine. Location: Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution**

Very common. Used and known to all speakers. Also common in Barunga Kriol, Victoria River Downs Kriol, Gurindji Kriol.

**Etymology**

Marra: *gumbu* (n.): 'urine'.

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

| Substrates | Alawa: *jurr-jurr* (n.): 'urine, piss'..Warndarrang: *warj-* (coverb) 'to urinate', (n.) 'urine'.Nunggubuyu: *raaj*, (n.) 'urine, bile', =*raya* - (v.) 'to urinate'Ngalakgan: *jele* (n.) 'urine', *jele-bu-* (v.) 'to urinate'.Ngandi: *gu-wortj* (n.) 'urine', *wortja*- (v.) 'to urinate'.Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *balkay* (n.) 'urine'. Also Yolu Matha: *njarrkula-djalkthun* 'urinate', *wuryun* 'piss', *wargirr*yun 'urinate'. |

**Gumbu** is anomalous as a non-English based Kriol verb for two reasons: (a) it is derived from a noun, not a verb or coverb and (b) among languages of the Roper Region, it occurs only in Marra as an isolate, but *gumbu* and various cognates are common across much of Australia, leading *gumbu/kumbu* to be a proposed proto-Pama-Nyungan form (Alpher 2004: 437–439).

With *gumbu* attested in only Marra among the languages of Roper region, it might be suggested that its presence in Kriol is attributable to transfer from Marra. However, its ubiquity in Pama-Nyungan languages likewise suggests that it could have transferred into Pidgin English in New South Wales and/or Queensland, then been brought into the immediate region upon the arrival of Munanga and retained in Kriol following creolisation. Against this, in Harris’ (1986) examination of the scant information available on Northern Territory Pidgin English, *gumbu* was not attested.

There is no specific verb for urinate attested in Marra. Dulu’s translation of ‘I’m going to urinate’, documented by Hale, instead utilises the nominal:

(4.43) **Nga-jurra na-gumbu**

1SG-go:FUT M[OBL]-urine

I’m going to urinate.
In Kriol, *gumbu* is an extremely common verb not just in the Roper variety, but extending beyond the neighbouring Barunga variety into the Victoria River district as well as occurring in Gurindji Kriol. It is unlikely that its occurrence in these dialects is attributable to Marra, but it is certainly possible that Marra helped to reinforce its transfer into the Roper Kriol variety, assuming it was present in Pidgin English prior to its spread into the Roper region.

4.5.7 *JALK*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>poke, stab, pierce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>vi. poke; inject; prick. Location: Barunga, Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Widely known. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Etymology**

Marra: *jalg* (coverb): ‘to stab; to (actually) spear or harpoon’.
Warndarrang: *jalg* (coverb): ‘to stab, to puncture; to plunge spear into’.
Nunggubuyu: *jarrg!* (verbal root form): ‘to stab, to pierce (with spear, knife, etc.)’


**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Ngandi: *jarrbaru* ‘to poke (stick into beehive to get honey)’.
Ritharrnu/Wägilak: *gum’bunjama* ‘puncture, make a hole in’, *dharrthun* ‘poke (e.g. a stick into beehive to obtain honey)’, *dharump* ‘spear, pierce (as nose), poke (e.g. turtle for eggs)’...
Ngalakgan: *gulh* ‘to poke, jab, strike, shoot; also strip (off) as paperbark’, *gurlurl* ‘to poke’.
Nunggubuyu: =*adhug* ‘to stab, to jab into’, =*walharra* ‘to stab or jab (with spear, knife, etc.); to poke’, =*wayawu* ‘to poke around, dig around (for something)’, =*abarralharra* ‘to poke around (e.g. with a pole in river, to try to locate a crocodile)’

The semantics and phonological form of the Kriol verb *jalk* mostly closely match the coverb *jalg* found in Marra and Warndarrang. Related forms occurring in Nunggubuyu and Alawa are more distant in form and semantics to what is found in Marra, Warndarrang and Kriol. It is a very common Kriol verb, indicated by its presence in the **Kriol Dikshenri**, and applies to a wide range of events including: needles and inoculations (children learn the word quickly thanks to immunisation programs); splinters and prickers; and an extension where it can be used euphemistically to refer to sexual intercourse. The correspondence between *jalg* as a Marra coverb and Kriol verb are demonstrated in the following examples:
(4.44) **jalg-nan.guyi** *na-mungga*

stab-3SG>1SG:(-janyi);PST;PUNCT M-echidna_spine

I got pricked by an echidna spine.

(Hale 1959: 431)

(4.45) **thei jalk yu la gam indit, ba meigi yu nam**

3PL prick 2SG LOC gum TAG to make:TR 2SG numb

They (dentists) give you a needle in your gum, don’t they, to make you numb.

[20130508KRIOLkmNGUgd01a.wav_00:07:16]

**4.5.8 Ngangga**

| English gloss | remove from burrow (typically in reference to turtles hibernating in mud during dry season). |
| Kriol Dikshenri | Not found. |
| Distribution | Widely known. |
| Etymology | Marra: *nga*-(coverb): 'turtle) to surface, to come up to the surface. Reduplicated form *nganga*.'
Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *ngangga* (noun/adverb): 'hiding (in burrow etc.)'
Nunggubuyu: *ngangga* (common noun): 'burrow, hole (of animal)'

| Semantic equivalents in other substrates | Warndarrang, Alawa: ?
Ngandi: *a-mendek* 'tortoise's burrow in mud'.
Ngalakgan: ? (*gortija*- 'to sit in lair, hole') |

Ngangga is another verb widely known among young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, which was previously undocumented in Kriol. Its commonness is attested by the Facebook status update below (which features the English-influenced spelling ‘ngenga’):

![Facebook status update](image)

*Figure 4–2: Facebook status update featuring the verb ngangga (24/8/14)*

As indicated in Figure 4–2, a common usage of *ngangga* is in reference to digging up freshwater turtles which bury themselves in mud in order to survive the dry season. The form *ngangga* occurs in Nunggubuyu as a noun, featuring in texts documented by Heath, e.g.
(4.46) anaarrgi *wu-ngangga*, *warra-wini* ngijang,  
 some burrow (ANA) they hit it (WARRA) more  
warra-wadaabirr[^1]  
WARRA-goanna  
Sometimes they killed sand goannas in their burrows.  

[Nunggubuyu (Maadi in Heath 1980b: 281–282, original glossing)]

Note that the use of *ngangga* in (4.46) is in reference to goanna burrows. This reference would not be expected in contemporary Kriol given that goannas have all but disappeared from the region. Note also that in Nunggubuyu, *ngangga* is a noun but Figure 4–2 shows it used as a verb where ‘ngunga turtle’ translates as ‘dig out turtle’. The lexeme *ngangga* is also attested in Ritharrŋu/Wägilak, listed by Heath as a noun/adverb, defined as ‘hiding (in burrow)’ (Heath 1980c: 216).

The precise form *ngangga* is not found in Marra, but Heath lists a form *nganga*: a reduplication of the coverb *nga-‘(turtle) to surface, to come up to the surface’ (Heath 1981: 480). The semantics and form of *nganga* are similar enough to that of the Kriol verb for it to be assumed that Marra has contributed to the occurrence of *ngangga* in Kriol. Also note that in Marra, *nganga* is a (co)verb, corresponding to the Kriol *ngangga*, whereas in Nunggubuyu and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak *ngangga* is listed as a nominal.

It is not entirely clear which, if any, of these languages would have been more influential in *ngangga* becoming a Kriol verb. Regardless, it is an interesting example of a non-English based verb, well-known to young people, that relates to a pre-contact-derived hunting or subsistence-related activity.

[^1]: WARRA and ANA are labels referring for noun classes occurring in Nunggubuyu.
4.5.9 **Ngarra**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>peep, look discreetly from a distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Widely known. Known to Barunga Kriol speakers as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>ngarra-</em> (coverb): 'to look; to look around'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See also: Alawa: <em>ngarra</em> <em>(v.)</em>: 'look round side of and up, e.g. poking head round door, or get up from the ground, look about the country'. Note: limited entry: no further grammatical information provided (e.g. example sentence or verb form) suggesting possible borrowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Warndarrang: <em>ngalwar-</em> (coverb): 'to be looking around'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngandi: <em>warnh-dhu</em> 'to look, to look around, to watch'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: ?, see also Yolŋu Matha: <em>war'yun</em> 'peep'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngalakgan: <em>rorrongh</em> 'to peep at'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nunggubuyu: several 'see' verbs, including: <em>madhanga-da</em> 'to look with neck outstretched', <em>bajawarawi</em> 'to scan the horizon, to survey an area visually'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ngarra* is a common Kriol verb that previously eluded Kriol documentation. It is well-known to all Kriol speakers who usually gloss *ngarra* as 'look' or 'peep' and commonly identify the characteristic of looking without detection or looking from long distance, as in:

(4.47) from **long** **distance** **gen** **yu** **luk** **indit.** *Soda* **laik**

from long distance EMPH 2SG look TAG sort_of like

*peep* from **longwei.** **O** **wen** **yu** stalking **wei.**

*peep* from **far** **away** or when **2SG** stalking JOCULAR

You’re looking from a long distance, right? Sort of like peeping from far away. Or when you’re stalking. Just jokes.

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd02a.wav_00:13:19]

Events described as *ngarra* are not exactly like those which an English speaker would describe with ‘peek’ or ‘peep’. Instead, *ngarra* events often relate to the concept of shame which is distinctive in Australian Aboriginal cultures (see e.g. Harkins 1990). A person who chooses to *ngarra* wants to avoid detection and not risk feeling shame. Related to this concept of shame, Kriol speakers are sometimes required to *ngarra* before entering a room or approaching a gathering in order to survey the group for taboo kin who must be avoided.

*Ngarra* is documented in both the Alawa and Marra dictionaries; however, the Alawa entry lacks the level of information provided for other verbs. The entry does not note which auxiliary verb is compatible with the coverb nor does it provide an example sentence. The raises the possibility that it is a borrowing (from Kriol and/or Marra) but
there is no other evidence to suggest that is the case. Regardless, ngarra is a further example of a common Kriol verb that has transferred from Marran languages, including Marra.

4.5.10 NGAYAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>shut up, be silent, behave yourself, be calm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Known to all Roper Kriol speakers and used by most. Also known to Barunga Kriol speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: ngayab- (coverb): ‘to be quiet; to cease doing something’. Warndarrang: ngayab- (coverb): ‘to be silent’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</td>
<td>Alawa: gavgab (vi): ‘sit quietly’ Ngalakgan: ngurt-qa- (v.caus.) ‘to make someone stop (doing something); to make someone be quiet’, jirri-bodewk (adj.) ‘quiet, docile’. Nunggubuyu: =abidungudha-(v.) ‘to calm down, become calm or quiet’, =mudagha- (v.) ‘to be silent, to shut up; (wind, noise etc.) to cease’, ngaamunu (adj.) ‘taciturn, silent, not talkative’, several other adjectives Ngandi, Ritharrŋu/Wagiik: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like ngarra, ngayap is a widely-known and a relatively high frequency verb used by Kriol speakers of all ages, its use extending to Facebook status updates (with the English-influenced spelling ‘ngayup’):

![Facebook status update](image)

**Figure 4–3: Example of ngayap on Facebook (7/1/13)**

In standard orthography, this example is repeated below:

(4.48) drinking na pab naf ba ngayap la eyaplein
drinking LOC pub enough PURP be_calm LOC aeroplane

yuwai (laugh)
yes

Drinking in the pub, (just) enough to be calm on the plane, yeah.

The semantics of ngayap quite closely correspond to the English notion of ‘being silent’, encompassing aspects such as being calm, demonstrating good behaviour as well as being silenced by another via a confrontation or a stern instruction. This corresponds very closely to the ngayab as a Marra coverb, most commonly used in the imperative
(2SG) construction *ngayab-gumi* 'be quiet!' which features numerous times in the Marra corpus collected during this study. Indeed, some young Kriol speakers with little knowledge of Marra could produce the fully-inflected Marra verb form *ngayab-gumi*, apparently borrowed by a minority as an idiomatic expression. Heath documented *ngayab* as a coverb occurring in Warndarrang as well as Marra, indicating that its commonness in Kriol is a result of transfer from the Marran language family.

### 4.6 Common non-English based Kriol verbs from languages other than Marra

The previous two sections and supplementary information provided in Appendix 10 encompassed thirty-four common Kriol verbs that are also attested in Marra with twenty-three of those occurring in additional languages. This section discusses those Kriol verbs which are derived from Aboriginal languages other than Marra. Fifteen such verbs have been identified and they are grouped in four ways according to their etymology:

1. verbs derived from Alawa (four: *birrij* 'dodge', *dilbak* 'tip over', *jal* 'copy', *nyangarrim* 'be selfish'),
2. verbs derived from Warndarrang (two: *maj* 'curse' and *moi* 'threaten'),
3. verbs derived from other languages of the immediate or broader region (six: *bagai* 'be relaxed', *baku* 'vomit', *birr* 'doubt', *burdurdup* 'piggyback', *nyang* 'chew', and *nyurr* 'grumble'), and
4. verbs derived from 'distal' Aboriginal languages whose presence in Kriol is attributable to Northern Territory Pidgin English (three: *bogi* 'swim/bathe', *gula* 'argue/yell' and *guna* 'defecate')

These fifteen verbs represent a quarter of the total number of non-English based verbs that are widely known to Kriol speakers. While these verbs go some way to counter previous evidence that Marra has a disproportionately greater lexical influence upon Kriol, it should be noted that six of the fifteen verbs described here are derived from other languages in the Marran family: Alawa and Warndarrang. Again, this indicates a pattern of Marra and Marran languages having a greater influence, whether that be attributable to historical and linguistic ecology factors or the nature of complex verbs in Marran languages (see examples 4.4–4.6) that allow coverbs to be borrowed relatively easily into an isolating language such as Kriol. The four groupings of verbs from languages other than Marra are discussed separately below.
4.6.1 **COMMON KRIOL VERBS DERIVED FROM ALAWA**

Four verbs that are known widely among adult Kriol speakers were found to be derived from Alawa (using Sharpe 2001a as the primary source): *birrij* 'dodge', *dilba* 'tip over', *jal* 'copy' and *nyangarrim* 'be selfish'.

*Birrij* was not previously documented as a Kriol verb. It provides an interesting example of lexical knowledge demonstrating cultural maintenance and adaptation simultaneously. Commonly glossed as 'dodge', *birrij* has two prototypical meanings among young Kriol speakers: the first refers to pre-contact cultural practices of dodging spears, associated with either intergroup fighting or battles, or sanctioned traditional punishment involving an aggrieved party attempting to injure a wrongdoer by spearing them (throwing spears from a distance). In this sense, *birrij* describes the dodging action a person does to avoid spears in flight. Such events no longer occur, but *birrij* is still applied to contemporary contexts when similar events occur. An example is during New Year’s Eve celebrations which involve much practical joking and may include chasing relatives with flour bombs, water bombs or spears. Example 4.49 illustrates this:

(4.49) yu irri wen nyujiya taim wen thei oldei
drinking hear:TR when new_year time when 3PL HABIT
guranguran garra spiya. Yuwai, det main dedi-mob
go_around[REDUP] spear yes the my father-COLL
na from ola Ritharrngu-mob thei oldei guran
EMPH from the Ritharrŋu-COLL 3PL HABIT go_around
tharrai na. Thei oldei jingat la alabat muluri
there EMPH 3PL HABIT call_out LOC 3PL mother_in_law_brother
or nephew-COLL or brother-COLL cross_cousin MoMoBr PURP
jandap la roud “jandap ja yu reken yu
stand LOC road stand there 2SG think 2SG
garra birrij dijan iya ba main?” im la’t la alabat
FUT dodge this here POSS my 3SG thus LOC 3PL
You hear it when it’s New Year’s, when they usually go around with spears. Yeah, my (classificatory) fathers, the Ritharrŋu guys, they always go around there. They always call out to their classificatory mother-in-law’s brothers or... nephews or brothers, cross-cousins, joking relatives, to stand up on the road: “Stand there, do you think you’ll dodge this (spear) of mine?” he says to them.

A newer prototypical meaning of *birrij* for many young speakers relates to the domain of sport: in Australian Rules football, *birrij* describes the action of dodging defenders and avoiding tackles while the game is in play. Given the popularity of Australian Rules football in communities like Ngukurr, the verb *birrij* is being maintained by many youths.
Although many now associate birrij with football, young speakers generally demonstrate an awareness of the pre-contact derived meaning relating to spearing. All young male Kriol speakers I spoke to knew this verb but some young women did not, presumably because it refers to activities typically carried out by young men.

As for its etymology, Marra speakers did not accept it as a Marra coverb, nor is it found in Marra documentation. When questioned, Marra speakers preferred to use the coverb wirrg-, as in:

\[(4.50) \text{mingi} \quad \text{wirrg-ganga} \quad \text{nana} \quad \text{nanggaya.}\]
\[
\text{now} \quad \text{jump-3SG:go;PST;PUNCT} \quad \text{the[M]} \quad \text{that[M]} \\
\text{He just jumped (out of the way).}\]

The coverb wirrg- is also used by Marra speakers to refer to the actions of Dreamings ‘jumping’ to places during the creation period, but this meaning is not applied to birrij. Birrij is most probably derived from the Alawa coverb berrej-, glossed by Sharpe (2001a) as ‘sneak’. In English, ‘sneak’ shares key semantic components with ‘dodge’: most notably both relate to avoiding something through deliberate movement. However birrij is a fast, overt movement whereas the examples Sharpe provides of berrej- allude to covert, slow movement, much like the English gloss ‘sneak’ (see Sharpe 2001a: 11). Ritharrŋu has an adverb, biditj, meaning ‘nearly’ or ‘almost’, that while belonging to a different wordclass has some shared semantic properties. Notice also that in example 4.49 the Kriol speaker refers to Ritharrŋu men using the lexeme, which is perhaps further evidence that (a) Ritharrŋu is relevant to the word’s etymology and (b) that Ritharrŋu and Wägilak may have some lexical influence on Roper Kriol despite being previously ignored. However, phonologically, syntactically and semantically, the Kriol verb birrij appears to be most obviously attributable to the Alawa coverb berrej.

The verb dilbak is more obviously derived from the Alawa coverb which carries the same form and semantics. Sharpe defined it as “to upset, tip outwards, spill” (2001a: 24) and this corresponds precisely to the Kriol meaning. No cognates were found in any other local languages although it was not possible to find verbs in Marra and Warndarrang with similar semantics. Again, it was not listed previously in the Kriol Dikshenri. Dilbak is not as commonly used or known as other verbs discussed in this chapter. In example 4.51, a Kriol speaker in his 20s recalls and defines it but says he had not heard it for a long time:
(4.51)  aa  imin  meigi  dilbak  det  ti,  imin  spili,  imin
        oh  3SG:PST  make:TR  spill  the  tea  3SG:PST  spill:TR  3SG:PST
        dropi,  imin-  imin  dilbak.  ei  ainimin  irri  det  wed
        drop:TR  3SG:PST  spill  hey  1SG:PST:NEG  hear:TR  the  word
        fo  longtaim
        for  long_time

Ah, s/he made the tea dilbak, s/he spilled it, s/he dropped it, s/he dilbak-ed.
Hey, I hadn’t heard that word for a long time

[DR_20120308KRIOL_drkmgNgUgd01a.wav:00:44:14]

The only indication of shared etymology is the Ngalakgan verb root *rdrl* defined as ‘to knock over, upset’ (Merlan 1983: 193). This definition corresponds with that of the Alawa/Kriol verb and the form is likely to be cognate. However, given that Kriol contains the more phonologically complex form, it remains probable that *dilbak* is in Kriol as a direct result of transfer from Alawa.

*Jal* was already listed in the Kriol Dikshenri, defined as ‘copy’ which is also how Sharpe defined the Alawa coverb *jarl*- This verb was mentioned previously in relation to the Marra/Kriol verb *mangala* (see §4.4.5). *Jal* refers to temporally short copying events such as repeating the movement or utterance of another, and is frequently used during rote learning where students are asked to “jal” their instructor. This form is not attested in any other local languages, although it was not possible to source verbs in Warndarrang, Ngandi or Ngalakgan that match the semantics of *jal*. In Marra, the coverb *birrird-* was defined as "to do (something) again, to repeat" (Heath 1981: 442) but this form is not used in Kriol.

Like *jal*, *nyangarri* features in the Kriol Dikshenri, listed as a verb and defined as ‘selfish, greedy, unsharing’. It was also glossed as “refuse” in Nicholls (2009: 30). Among local languages, this form is attested only in Alawa, but Sharpe lists it as an adjective, defining it as “greedy” (Sharpe 2001a: 89). In Kriol, it occurs as a transitive verb and carries the transitive suffix –*im*, although the final nasal is usually dropped in normal speech. Variant forms are also attested among Kriol speakers such as *nyangirri(m)* and *nyanggirri(m)*. It remains widely known and connotes cultural values that are important and salient in Aboriginal cultures pertaining to the sharing of resources with kin (cf. ngaja).

*Nyangarrim* events essentially go against positively-valued and expected norms of kin-based resource sharing, which are more prevalent in Aboriginal cultures than in Anglo culture (Peterson 1993). The actions themselves may closely relate to what an English speaker might perceive as greedy, selfish or unsharing actions, but the underlying value systems held by Kriol speakers give *nyangarrim* events a different degree of significance.
In Marra, Heath (1981: 442) lists a different adjective glossed as “greedy, selfish”: *burdirrmin*.

### 4.6.2 Common Kriol verbs derived from Warndarrang

Warndarrang is the least well-documented language of the Roper Region. Heath’s monograph, which contains a grammar, texts and dictionary (1980a), was based on limited fieldwork carried out primarily with one of the last fluent speakers who passed away in the 1970s. Virtually no additional work has been done on the language since then. Using typological and linguistic ecology information, Munro deemed it unnecessary to include Warndarrang in her survey of local languages when applying the Transfer Constraints approach (Munro 2004). Despite the apparent expectation that Warndarrang would have little detectable direct influence on Kriol, two Warndarrang coverbs, *maj* ‘curse’ and *moi* ‘threaten’ are widely known and used by all Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, although neither verb was previously noted as occurring in Kriol.

Kriol speakers translate *maj* quite generically as ‘curse’, but the events that *maj* refers to are quite specific to local cultural practices. To *maj* is to proclaim a place or object as sacred, taboo or off-limits to most kin, by invoking an actual named sacred site upon a previously generic, non-sacred place or object. These names are, as one young Kriol speaker put it, *big kantri neim* ‘place names of cultural significance’, to be learned and used only by those with experience and authority gained by participating in higher-order ceremonies. Once a *maj* act has occurred, only those who are appropriate traditional guardians (i.e. *junggayi*) for that sacred place can undo the proclamation and absolve the restriction. A *maj* act is generally seen by others as trouble-making, occurring when someone is upset or displeased and projects that displeasure onto the general populace by proclaiming a valued location such as the shop or council office as sacred and off-limits. Heath’s gloss of *maj* as a Warndarrang coverb, ‘to make sacred’ succinctly connotes this meaning and differentiates it from verbs that refer to other forms of cursing such as ‘singing’ or performing ‘black magic’ as a covert act of malevolence.
The other verb attributed exclusively to Warndarrang is *moi* (*muy*, in Warndarrang orthography). Heath glossed it as "to miss, to not hit" (1980a: 142). In Kriol, it prototypically refers to events where someone threatens to and physically shapes up to fight or hit someone. This can be done by raising a fist, or more subtly by jerking a shoulder towards someone or by using a gesture widely used across Aboriginal Australia where the tongue with the tip folded under bottom teeth is shown to someone to indicate a will to hit them (as can be seen in Figure 4–4). This gesture is commonly used by children in play-fighting with siblings and peers. Young adults also described semantic extensions of the verb to more broadly refer to hesitating or holding back, such as this fictional example a young speaker provided in relation to (not) holding back from drinking alcohol:

(4.52) $\begin{align*}
\text{ai} & \quad \text{kaan} & \quad \text{moimoimoi} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{det} & \quad \text{ken.} & \quad \text{Sun} & \quad \text{as} \\
1\text{SG} & \quad \text{NEG}[\text{FUT}] & \quad \text{threaten}[\text{REDUP}] & \quad \text{LOC} & \quad \text{the} & \quad \text{can} & \quad \text{soon} & \quad \text{as} \\
\text{ai} & \quad \text{git} & \quad \text{na} & \quad \text{Mederengka,} & \quad \text{ai} & \quad \text{kaan} & \quad \text{moi} & \quad \text{na} \\
1\text{SG} & \quad \text{get} & \quad \text{LOC} & \quad \text{Mataranka} & \quad 1\text{SG} & \quad \text{NEG}[\text{FUT}] & \quad \text{threaten} & \quad \text{LOC} \\
\text{det} & \quad \text{thedipek.} & \quad \text{that} & \quad \text{carton_of_beer} &  &  &  & \\
\end{align*}$

I won’t hesitate to drink the can of beer. As soon as I get to Mataranka, I won’t hesitate to start drinking the carton of beer.

4.6.3 **Common Kriol verbs derived from other languages in the region**

So far we have covered 40 common Kriol verbs which were all found to be derived from Marra, Alawa and/or Warndarrang exclusively or have shared etymologies that include Marra. The following six verbs are derived from languages of the region not including Marra.

*Baku* ‘vomit’ is an interesting case. Among contact language varieties, it is common in Roper Kriol and in the discontiguous mixed language, Gurindji Kriol, but in Barunga Kriol
– the closest variety to Roper Kriol – the English-based verb *bamit* is preferred. The semantics of *baku* and the English ‘vomit’ appear to be identical, and so it is a curious point as to why a non-English based lexeme should occur in Roper Kriol while speakers of the neighbouring dialect use the English-based one with no obvious semantic distinction between the etymons. *Baku* appears to be derived from a coverb of the same form found in the Ngumpin languages Gurindji, Ngarinyman and Bilinarra (see e.g. *paku* (Meakins et al. 2013: 300)). The presence of a coverb from a Ngumpin language in Roper Kriol is anomalous and the simplest explanation is that *baku* was incorporated into Northern Territory Pidgin English prior to creolisation occurring at the Roper River Mission. Semantic equivalents in local languages have unrelated forms: the coverb *wi*-occurs in Marra and Warndarrang, *wewe*- in Alawa, the verb root -*werh*- in Ngalakgan and Ngandi and -*nganyja*- in Nunggubuyu.

The other verbs listed in this section are derived from languages found in the Roper River Region. *Birr* is a widely known Kriol verb that had not been noted in previous documentation. Kriol speakers often gloss *birr* as ‘doubt’. It is a communication verb that relates to events covered by a range of related English verbs such as criticise, disagree, run down, talk negatively (about someone) and also doubt. *Birr* appears to be derived from Ngandi and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak. Heath documented a Ngandi adverb *birrhmayh* ‘truthfully’ where –*mayh* is a privative suffix, suggesting *birrhmayh* has a literal meaning of ‘doubt-without’. Heath also documented the Ngandi verb *birrkgah-dhu*, glossed as ‘to blame’ which is clearly cognate with the Ritharrŋu verb *birrka’yun* glossed as ‘to accuse’ (Heath 1980c: 180). The presence of a common Kriol verb derived from Ngandi and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak indicates that these languages make some contribution to Kriol, despite them sometimes being dismissed as having no influence (e.g. Munro 2004).

Similarly the verb *bagai*, which refers to taking it easy, being relaxed or nonchalant, or carrying out actions with ‘swagger’ is derived from a source not usually thought to be influential on Kriol. It appears to have transferred from the Yolŋu Matha verb *bagapagayun* ‘stagger, walk as though drunk’. To *bagai* is often perceived as negative or amusing to others, similar to displaying arrogance:

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67 This information is based on my own interactions with speakers of that variety and disagrees with the *Kriol Dikshenri* that listed *bako* [sic] as occurring in Barunga.
(4.53) KM:  
\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{en} & \text{den} & \text{maidi} & \text{wen} & \text{sambidi} & \text{luk} & \text{la} & \text{yu}: & \text{"ei} \\
1SG & then & maybe & when & someone & see & LOC & 2SG & hey \\
luk & ja & im & \text{bagai}\text{bagai}\text{bat} & jeya & lu'! & \ldots \\
see & there & 3SG & be\_relaxed\{REDUP\}:PROG & there & see \\
Sambidi & garra & hiti & im & thanja., & yuno, & detkain. \\
\end{array}
\]

And then maybe when someone sees you, (they'll say): “Hey look there, he’s being arrogantly relaxed, there see!... Someone’s gonna hit him, they will”. You know, that sort of thing.

DR:  
\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{laik} & \text{“don't relax” you know.} & \text{Im sei “stop} \\
like & don't & relax & you know 3SG say stop \\
\text{bagai}\text{bagai}\text{bat”}: & \text{stop relaxing.} \\
be\_relaxed\{REDUP\}:PROG & stop & relaxing \\
As in, (saying) “don't relax” you know. He’s saying “stop bagai-ing” (meaning) stop relaxing.
\end{array}
\]

Cognates to the verb bagapagayun (documented by Beulah Lowe, via Zorc 1986) were not found in the documentation of languages of the immediate Roper River region.

The verb burdurdup refers to carrying someone or something on your back, piggyback-style. A Kriol speaker provided a Kriol definition of oji-oji-im, literally ‘horse-horse-TR’. Prototypically, burdurdup refers to a carer (parent, older sibling, caregiver) carrying a child on their back. The verb does not occur in Marra (where Heath listed the coverb birra- as ’to carry on back, to carry piggyback’) but clearly related verbs occur in Nunggubuyu – =bududuga- ‘to carry on one’s back’ and Yolŋu Matha – buḏuḏupθun ‘gallop’. A Nunggubuyu example comes from Gabanja who used it in a text provided to Heath (1980b: 234):

(4.54) \text{ngu-bu-bududugaa} 
\[
\begin{array}{c}
3\text{FSG/ngarra}>3\text{FSG/ngarra-REDUP-piggyback}\text{68} \\
\text{It carried her piggyback} \\
\end{array}
\]

[Nunggubuyu (Gabanja in Heath 1980b: 234)]

\textit{Burdudup} is one of a set of six non-English based carrying verbs that this study has explored (along with jarlu, wurruwurru, widiwid, ngabarla and jalaibi, see §3.5.2) but of these six verbs it remains one of the most prevalent among Kriol speakers of all ages. Kamahl Murrungun (aged 25) glossed and exemplified it as follows:

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68 Where “ngarra” refers to the ngarra noun class which includes lharragula (saltwater crocodile) which is the agent in the example verb form.
The Yolŋu language Ritharrŋu also appears to have contributed the verb *nyang* to Kriol, meaning ‘chew’. Young Kriol speakers most readily associated this verb with the phrase ‘*nyang warnu*’ where *warnu* is a mix of tobacco and ashen Eucalyptus bark that typically old women hold and manipulate inside their mouths instead of smoking cigarettes. It is only secondarily associated with chewing food. This appears to directly relate to the Ritharrŋu verb *nyaŋ’kun*, defined as ‘to take a meal, have a feed’ by Heath (1980c: 214). Note that in expanding the definition to incorporate information gathered relating to other Yolŋu languages, Zorc included ‘chew’ in the definition (1986: 213).

The final verb discussed in this section is *nyurr* (often duplicated to *nyurr-nyurr*). It is typically glossed as ‘grumbling’ or ‘whinging’ by Kriol speakers, referring to a verbal act of expressing dissatisfaction in a way that is somewhat canonical across many Aboriginal groups. In contrast with bolder displays of discontent and anger that verbs like *gula* and *jawak* describe, to *nyurr* is to express dissatisfaction typically via a kind of droning, not-always-intelligible monologue to no-one in particular. The durative and broadcasted aspects of *nyurr* events are what distinguish them from equivalents that are familiar to non-Aboriginal people. The etymology of *nyurr* appears to relate to numerous languages. In Marra, the coverb *nyurr-* was documented only with the meaning of blowing one’s nose. In Ngalakgan, the verb root *nyow-ga* was defined as ‘to make noise’, while in Alawa, the coverb *nyur-* was documented as referring to the howl of a dingo or the droning noise a plane makes. Zorc’s compilation of data from Yolŋu languages includes a Gälpu verb *nyorŋ’nyurŋdhun* ‘whine (dog)’ and a Gupapuyŋu verb *norr’yun* ‘snore, sound like a bullroarer’. It seems apparent the presence of *nyurr* in Kriol is attributable to reinforcement of cognate verbs in multiple languages.

The verbs described in this section indicate that Ritharrŋu and other Yolŋu languages have had some influence on the lexicon of Kriol. This counters previous characterisations of substrate influence of Roper Kriol which typically omit these languages from the pool of potentially influential substrates.
4.6.4 Common Kriol verbs derived from distal languages via Northern Territory Pidgin English

The remaining three verbs discussed in this chapter – *bogi* 'swim/bathe', *gula* 'argue' and *guna* 'defecate' – are common and widely documented Kriol verbs that are derived from Aboriginal languages. But rather than transferring from substrate languages, they are attributable to distal languages (generally from the Sydney area) and entered Kriol via its precursor, Northern Territory Pidgin English. While these verbs cannot be considered as representing local substrate influence, what they do have in common with other verbs discussed in this chapter is that they persist in Kriol despite a lack of reinforcement from standard English speakers.

*Bogi* originates from the Dharuk language of Sydney and was attested in Northern Territory Pidgin English prior to the existence of Kriol (Harris 1986: 287–288). It is a high-frequency verb across most or all Kriol dialects. It can refer to washing, bathing or swimming for pleasure. All three Marran languages use the coverb *nguy-* for swim but this is not attested in Kriol. Similarly, *gula* is attested in the Sydney language (as *gulara*), defined as "angry, cross, displeased or ill-natured" (Troy 1993). It is also incredibly common in Kriol, including the Barunga variety, referring to acts of verbal fighting or shouting in anger. When asked to translate the verb into Marra, Marra speakers chose to use the coverb *ngarri* ‘fight’.

The other Kriol verb that is likely to be attributable to Northern Territory Pidgin English is *guna* ‘defecate’. Like *gumbu* ‘urinate’ (see §4.5.6), cognates of *guna* are common across the large Pama-Nyungan family and hence it is likely that it was incorporated in the pidgin that accompanied the spread of the pastoral industry. However, unlike *gumbu* which does occur in Marra, there are no forms in languages of the Roper Region that are cognate with *guna*.

4.6.5 Common non-English based Kriol verbs with unclear origins

It is not possible to determine or speculate on the etymologies of all non-English-based verbs that are widely known to all Kriol speakers. At least eleven common verbs did not feature in existing documentation of local Aboriginal languages and so their etymologies remain unclear. Yet these verbs are still noteworthy as they provide further examples of

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69 A handful of Kriol nouns also share this etymology, such as *gabarra* 'head' and *binji* 'stomach'.
lexemes that categorise events that, for whatever reason, were not encoded with lexemes from the superstrate language.

The verb *gabai* categorises a common beckoning gesture that is quite different to the Anglo 'beckon'. Gesturing to someone to “come” in remote Aboriginal Australia is done with an outstretched hand, palm facing downwards where the fingers are quickly drawn towards the gesturing person creating a loose fist. The hand is also usually simultaneously drawn slightly closer towards the body. To Munanga, this gesture is more reminiscent of waving than beckoning and is unlike the beckoning gesture more familiar to English speakers that uses a vertical upwards pointing index finger that is then curled or moved towards the gesturer. To Kriol speakers, the *gabai* gesture is also associated with the commonly seen lizard species *Diporiphora bilineata*, sometimes called *gabai lisid* 'beckoning lizard' (discussed further in §7.3.2) because of its characteristic habit of waving a leg in a circular motion. *Gabai* is known and used by all Roper Kriol speakers but was previously undocumented. Its etymology is not known. The form *gabai* is reminiscent of the attention-grabbing verb and exclamation found in Marra: *gabu* 'oh! hey!'. However given that *gabu* occurs as a lexeme in Kriol (often pronounced *gabo*) it seems unlikely that one Marra lexeme would diverge to become two in Kriol – one almost identical to the substrate form and one differing more significantly in both semantics and phonological form.

Three verbs of which the etymology is not known relate to sex and sexuality, evoking the notion that substrate lexemes often pertain to private domains or relate to sexuality (e.g. Holm 2000: 116). *Kayai* refers to being horny or randy, while *juljul* and *nyumunyumu* are near-synonyms to the English 'thrust'. It is possible that additional non-English based lexemes occur in this domain that continue to elude external researchers. The etymology of these verbs is unclear but evidence suggests they may have a broad geographic distribution and are not restricted to Roper Kriol.

Other verbs for which it was not possible to determine the source language include *gai*, which is defined in the *Kriol Dikshenri* as 'be proud of; think highly of'. It is a transitive verb that can refer to an internal emotional state of positive feelings towards a person or object, or it can refer to a verbal or physical manifestation of those feelings, such as praising or complementing. It is widely known and used among all Roper Kriol speakers.

Another verb that relates to an emotional state is *nyirrk* which I would gloss as 'fixate' although a clear semantic description remains elusive. Kriol speakers offer various examples and explanations of *nyirrk*, such as it referring to a desire to fight someone
because they have taken something from you and will not own up to it, or being unable to give up on wanting something from someone else. It is widely known but my inability to discern an accurate semantic description suggests that it does not clearly correspond with a related English verb. A coverb *nyirrg*- is documented in Alawa but defined as ‘frighten, make jump’ (Sharpe 2001a: 90), which has little semantic relationship to the Kriol verb and so appears to be unrelated.

_Jawak_ is an intransitive verb that, like _nyirrk_, encodes events with no direct English equivalent. Semantically related to _gula_ ‘argue, yell’ (see §4.6.4), _jawak_ has a more specific and culturally-embedded denotation. It refers more specifically to the act of publicly venting or ‘broadcasting’ a wrongdoing. While the discourse produced during a _jawak_ event may indicate a grievance with an individual, the direct target of the discourse is the general populace and it is carried out in public locations such as in the street or in front of the local shop or council office. The intention is for everyone in the vicinity to become aware of the wrongdoing or issue causing anger. The form _jawak_ was not documented in the _Kriol Dikshenri_ or in reference materials of local traditional languages. When asked to translate the Kriol sentence _det olgaman im jawak_ ‘the old lady is _jawak-ing_’ into Marra, the more generic coverb _ngarri_ ‘fight’ was used:

(4.56)  

\[
\text{Ngaya } n-jawulba \quad ngarri-warlindu
\]

\[
\text{the[F] F-old_person fight-3SG:go;PRS}
\]

The old lady is fighting.

The practice itself is common to many Aboriginal groups, see for instance the Western Desert concept of _yaarlpirri_, which is a “form of public rhetoric or oratory” that can be used to air grievances (Kral 2012: 53). Its common use in Kriol suggests a continuation of the practice which certainly predates the arrival of Munanga.

Other verbs for which etymological information was not available are less specific to local cultural practices, but can still categorise events for which there is no clear lexical equivalent in English. _Ngum_ is a hitting verb that specifically refers to hitting someone on the back, an action that is complemented by a thumping noise that is thoroughly gratifying to the actor of the verb. _Wurrwurruru_ refers to holding or nursing a baby in order to calm it down and/or put it to sleep. To _mal_ (often reduplicated as _malmal_) is to preen or make attractive and can be seen as an unnecessarily vain action, as indicated by this humorous invented dialogue two Kriol speakers provided, offering the context of someone taking a long time to get ready for the community disco:
It is possible that etymologies for some of these verbs will be determined by expanding the search for etymons to more distant languages. Alternatively, it may be that some are derived from languages of the immediate region that are no longer spoken such as Ngandi, Ngalakgan or Warndarrang but the existing documentation did not include them, which is understandable given many of them categorise quite specific or relatively mundane events.

**4.7 DISTRIBUTION OF NON-ENGLISH BASED KRIOL VERBS**

So far, this chapter has focused on verbs that were found to be widely known to all or most adult Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. This section provides some commentary on the distribution of non-English based verbs, offering insights into age distribution, including a discussion of verbs not previously mentioned that are falling out of use among young generations of Kriol speakers. Geographic distribution is also broadly discussed, considering which verbs are prevalent in other dialects of Kriol.

In terms of age distribution, among the verbs already discussed that I claim are known to all or most adult Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, evidence already exists that some are used less among younger speakers. See for instance example (4.51) where the speaker in his 20s exclaims that he had temporarily forgotten about the verb *dilbak* 'tip over'. Other verbs such *birr* 'doubt' were known widely but some young informants said they rarely used the word. Other verbs indicate intergenerational semantic shift, such as *gululu* 'rumble' where the semantics of the original Marra source refer primarily to the noise made by thunder but the primary sense reported by young Kriol speakers was in reference to a grumbling stomach and the weather sense appears to have become secondary. In one case, gender-based differentiation was evident where the verb *birrij*
'dodge' was known to all men, courtesy of its application to Australian Rules football, but some young women were unsure of its meaning.

In addition to these relatively minor indicators of subsiding use or knowledge, other verbs provide much clearer cases of declining use. Several verbs were widely known to older Kriol speakers, including those who know Marra and/or another traditional language(s) well, but were barely known or unknown to younger Kriol speakers. The example of *jalap* 'paddle' was discussed in §3.5.2, where it was suggested that the cessation of travel by canoe after the mid-1900s has led this verb (derived from a Marra coverb) to be no longer used or known to younger generations. A similar example is the verb *garr*, also derived from a Marra coverb, which refers to roasting meat in a ground oven. This is a practice that was ubiquitous until recent decades but now occurs infrequently in Ngukurr. Few younger Kriol speakers are familiar with this verb (despite all recognising the event), who instead prefer the English-derived form *roustim* 'roast'.

In terms of geographic distribution, only preliminary work has been done on determining the geographic distribution of non-English-based verbs that are present in Roper Kriol. While the *Kriol Dikshenri* attempted to incorporate such information, it has been demonstrated here that this resource had not documented a large proportion of the verbs described in this chapter and so no information is available for those verbs. Additionally, as identified in several instances above, my own research has found problems with the *Kriol Dikshenri*'s assigning of some verbs to a particular location or dialect. I was able to carry out some preliminary work to test geographic distribution of these verbs when early in my fieldwork I interviewed a middle-aged Kriol interpreter (who also has some linguistics training) from Beswick and checked her knowledge of many of these verbs. At that stage, my documentation was less complete than what is presented here and so a number of the verbs described above were not covered. Nevertheless, the interpreter’s information provided some interesting insights. Some verbs that are attributed solely to Marra appear to be common in the neighbouring Barunga Kriol variety, where Marra has a negligible role in the linguistic ecology. Examples of such verbs include *gubarl* 'scavenge', *gardaj* 'grab' and *nyal* 'support in fight'. Yet other verbs that are derived from Marra and very common in Roper Kriol were reportedly not well known to Beswick Kriol speakers, such as *ngaja* 'ask for something' and *gulaj* 'nod' (where a different non-English based lexeme, *bunggu*, is apparently used). Some verbs with unknown etymologies appear to be restricted to Roper Kriol, such as *mal* 'preen' and *ngum* 'hit on back', providing evidence that their etymology may be with languages of the immediate region.
Overall, early evidence does not provide a correlation between etymology and geographic distribution. That is, some verbs that are clearly derived from sources very local to the Roper Region have made their way to other varieties, while others have not. A careful dialectological study of Kriol speaking communities that incorporates the verbs described in this chapter would be an ideal topic for further investigation.

4.8 Hypotheses on the presence of non-English based verbs in Kriol

This chapter has demonstrated that the lexicon of Roper River Kriol consists of more verbs borrowed from substrate languages – Marra, in particular – than had been identified in previous documentation. Revealing this not-insignificant set of non-English-based verbs that are persisting among young Kriol speakers leads to the question: why have these verbs transferred into Kriol? Several factors or hypotheses may explain why the non-English-based verbs described in this chapter have transferred and retain currency in Kriol:

1. Verb structure of Marran languages and the presence of uninflecting coverbs
2. Semantic properties of the verbs (especially those reflecting local cultural concepts and practices)
3. Physical salience/gestural qualities of the verbs
4. Increased density and sedentariness of the population
5. Degree of contact during and after creolization.

Factors 1 and 5 may explain why Marra-derived verbs in particular are over-represented in the complete set on non-English-based verbs, whereas factors 2–4 are generic factors that could apply to verbs from any substrate language. Each is discussed in more detail below.

Section 4.2 introduced the hypothesis that the verbal structure of Marran languages, with their uninflecting semantically-salient coverbs, allows them to be easily borrowed into an isolating language like Kriol. As mentioned in that section, a similar explanation was given to explain the prevalence (around one-third) of verbs in Gurindji Kriol that are derived from Gurindji coverbs.

Meakins and O'Shannessy (2012) explore this hypothesis further in relation to the transfer of verbs from Gurindji and Warlpiri into Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri respectively. They suggest that a "crucial factor" (ibid: 237) in the borrowability of coverbs is their degree of boundedness, that is, whether coverbs in the original languages occur in 'loose-nexus' or 'tight-nexus' verbal structures. Loose and tight-nexus structures
are distinguished by how easily a coverb can be separated from the inflecting verb. Meakins and O'Shanessy suggest that the low number of Warlpiri-derived verbs in Light Warlpiri is attributable to complex verbs in Warlpiri being 'tight-nexus', identifying aspects such as them forming a single phonological phrase (e.g. no pause possible after the coverb). Gurindji complex verbs on the other hand are considered 'loose-nexus' (e.g. the coverb can be syntactically isolated) and it is suggested that this is a factor in the high degree of borrowing of Gurindji coverbs into Gurindji Kriol. The Marra/Kriol data presented in this chapter does not support this theory as Marra verbs would be considered tight-nexus, akin to the Warlpiri verbs, where coverbs only occur bound to an inflecting verb, forming a single phonological phrase. Yet Marra and related languages with similar 'tight-nexus' coverb constructions have contributed 40 verbs to Kriol – greater than the number of Warlpiri verbs found in the mixed language Light Warlpiri.

Another hypothesis explaining the presence of sixty non-English based verbs in Kriol is that the events they categorise have distinctive semantic properties that contributed to their transfer. It can be postulated that in instances where a verb’s semantics do not share a lexical equivalent in English then that verb has transferred into Kriol to fill a lexical gap or to maintain a local, culturally-salient meaning not attested in English. This may explain the presence of many of these verbs which encode seemingly mundane yet refined, culturally-specific events that are not closely replicated in non-Aboriginal communities, such as pesky children who *mangala* (want to do what someone else is doing) *en masse*, or the demand-sharing related verb *ngaja* ‘ask for something’ or the intimate but commonplace extraction of head lice referred to by the verb *di*. Other examples include the public ‘broadcasting’ of anger encoded by *jawak*, the surreptitious shame-avoiding surveying that is achieved when you *ngarra* or the ubiquitous quarreling among young children that undoubtedly involves them threatening to hit each other, i.e. *moi*. But other non-English-based verbs categorise events that are not noticeably distinctive from English equivalents: why do Kriol speakers *bal* instead of ‘pound’ something? Why does light *mirmim* rather than ‘flicker’ and why do dogs *gubarl* rather than ‘scavenge’? Furthermore there are numerous instances where English-derived verbs have been lexicalised to encompass meanings that match the semantics of related verbs in local languages. In these cases, suitable coverbs with appropriate semantic ranges have given way to English lexemes that have been semantically reshaped. Examples include *breigim* (from ‘break’) which can mean ‘break’ in the English sense (i.e. to render unusable) but often means ‘break off or remove a part of a whole’. The semantic range of the Kriol *breigim* closely corresponds to that of the Marra coverb *mud*.
Another example is the Kriol *libum* (from ‘leave’) which means ‘abandon’ (i.e. leave alone) rather than ‘depart’, corresponding to the coverb *wayi*- in Marra.

While investigating these verbs with young Kriol speakers, it became apparent that one feature some verbs shared was incorporating a well-defined gestural component. Wohlgemuth (2009) suggests that verbs are borrowed less than nouns because they are cognitively and semantically less salient. It seems plausible that verbs that can be defined or represented by a well-defined gesture are more salient and therefore more likely to be borrowed or transferred into a creole. Some gestures that accompany non-English based verbs have already been described, such as the beckoning of *gabai*, the tongue-folding gesture associated with *moi* ‘threaten’ or the outstretched hand that iconically indicates the verb *ngaja* ‘ask for something’. In total, eight non-English-based verbs were able to be defined by Kriol speakers with only a gesture (although typically complemented by verbal descriptions). These are summarised in Table 4–3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb ‘gloss’</th>
<th>Defining gesture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>bal</em> ‘pound’</td>
<td>A fist (with thumb at the top of the hand) jerked sharply downwards (i.e. perpendicular to the ground)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gabai</em> ‘beckon’</td>
<td>Outstretch hand with palm facing downward, then fingers quickly drawn towards the body, making a loose fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gardaj</em> ‘grab, scoop’</td>
<td>Cupped hand, fingers close together. Hand extends from and quickly returns to the body in a circular ‘scooping’ motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gulaj</em> ‘nod’</td>
<td>A confident nod or bow of the head, quite sharply downward, usually not repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>moi</em> ‘threaten’</td>
<td>Raised fist and/or tongue blade protruding from mouth with tip folder under bottom teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ngaja</em> ‘ask for something’</td>
<td>Open hand, angled slightly downward towards the requestee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ngarra</em> ‘peep’</td>
<td>Looking with craned neck and raised eyebrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nyip</em> ‘retreat, be scared’</td>
<td>Fingertips drawn quickly together on one hand and hand simultaneously drawn towards body or angled sideways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4–3: Non-English based verbs in Kriol that can be defined exclusively by gesture*

Other verbs described in this chapter were not strictly gestural, like those listed in Table 4–3, but are physically salient and can be acted out. These qualities enabled me to create videos featuring two young Kriol speakers describing nine verbs by providing verbal descriptions and gesturing or acting out the verbs. This unplanned activity resulted in useful visual demonstrations of the verbs *moi* ‘threaten’, *gubarl* ‘scavenge’, and *ngum* ‘hit on back’ (Ngukurr Language Centre 2013a), *ngarra* ‘peep’, *waranga* ‘be lost’ and *dinggal* ‘limp’ (Ngukurr Language Centre 2013b) and *bagai* ‘be relaxed’, *burdurdup* ‘piggyback’
and *ngaja* ‘ask for something’ (Ngukurr Language Centre 2013c). The videos are publicly available on YouTube.

An hypothesis explaining another subset of non-English based verbs found in contemporary Kriol relates to population density and sedentariness increasing across the contact and post-contact period. A number of verbs described in this chapter encode events that are highly social and interactional, such as *mangala* ‘jump on bandwagon’, *di* ‘delouse’, *ngayap* ‘be silent’, *warl* ‘covet’, *mal* ‘preen’, *gai* ‘praise’, *nyurr* ‘grumble’, *nyal* ‘help to fight’, *jal* ‘copy’, *gulaj* ‘nod/agree’, *gula* ‘argue’, *jawak* ‘publicly yell’ and so on. The persistence of such verbs in Kriol could be attributable to lifestyle changes where Marra people and those from neighbouring language groups now live in larger, higher density communities than in pre-contact times and are also more sedentary. In comparison to previous eras, Kriol speakers are as social (if not more) than previous generations but interact less with country. Correspondingly, verbs that encode social and interactional events may persist, whereas verbs that encode events relating to interacting with country may be less likely to persist. This can explain why other verbs derived from Marra coverbs that are known to older Kriol speakers have been recently abandoned, such as *jalap* ‘paddle’, *garr* ‘roast in ground oven’ and *warr* ‘grind’ (prototypically referring to grinding lily seed to make damper). These events were more commonly occurring when Marra people were more mobile and living in smaller numbers.

Other evidence supporting this hypothesis is the maintenance of culturally-embedded avoidance behaviours and practices related to kinship (discussed further in Chapter 5). The ongoing need for Kriol speakers to regularly communicate covertly may contribute to the ongoing salience of interactional and communicative events encoded by non-English based verbs. For example, the use of *gabai* ‘beckon’ in (4.57) shows it being applied to highly social situation (a card game) but in a way requiring covert communication:

(4.57) yu gaba i la im ja ba ((gestures cardgame/gambling))

[AH_20110906KRIOL.drahNGUgd02a.wav_00:04:32]

Gesture to him/her there to come for cards/gambling

If the presence of a number of the non-English-based verbs described in this chapter can be attributed to Kriol speakers’ highly social, higher-density, yet more sedentary lifestyle, it may also explain why other verbs derived from Marra coverbs that are known to older Kriol speakers have been recently abandoned, such as *jalap* ‘paddle’, *garr* ‘roast in ground oven’ and *warr* ‘grind’ (which prototypically refers to grinding lily seed to make damper)
damper), as they refer to events that were more common when Marra people were more mobile and less adapted to higher-density living.

The possibility that many of Kriol’s non-English-based verbs are attributable to gestural components or the move towards higher-density, more sedentary lifestyles does not account for why, out of all the original languages of the region, Marra is the most common source. Neither Marra people nor their language has ever been dominant in Ngukurr or its precursor, the Roper River Mission. We can therefore suggest an hypothesis that the presence of over thirty Kriol verbs that also occur in Marra is explained by the extended period of contact between (a) pidgin and emerging Kriol speakers in the early decades of the Roper River Mission and (b) Marra people who continued to reside on their own country, maintaining the use of their language and cultural practices. As described in Chapter 2, linguists had not previously acknowledged that Marra people moved from their own country to the Mission over an extended period of around forty years. This then suggests that the degree of contact – both synchronic and diachronic – between non-pidgin/creole speaking Marra people and emerging pidgin/creole speaking mission residents was much greater than previously thought, providing greater opportunity for Marra coverbs to transfer into the emerging creole.

In summary, this chapter has uncovered a greater prevalence of non-English-based verbs in Kriol than had been previously described. It found that Marra and Marran languages have contributed more to this stock of verbs than other languages of the region. Generic factors that may have contributed to the presence of these particular verbs in Kriol include (a) the semantic nuances of the verbs (in that they may encode events that are culturally-embedded or salient), (b) gestural and physical qualities that may increase their salience and (c) higher population densities leading to verbs that refer to communicative or other highly social events becoming more frequent and therefore being maintained.

However, these factors do not explain why verbs from Marra and Marran languages predominate among the set of non-English-based verbs. Two explanations are offered in that regard. The first is that the structures of complex verbs in Marran languages, which include semantically-salient uninflecting coverbs as the first element, provide a suitable environment for coverbs to transfer into Kriol as isolated verbs. The second is that the extended contact period (around 40 years) between people who spoke and used Marra as their dominant language and those speaking an emerging and creolising Kriol provided a situation that allowed for Marra lexical material to transfer to Kriol.
5  **KINTERMS AND OTHER WAYS OF REFERRING TO PEOPLE IN MARRA AND KRIOL**

This chapter turns the attention of this dissertation to a new domain: kinship. This domain is especially pertinent to this thesis given not only its universality across human languages and cultures but also that it is highly salient and complex in Australian Aboriginal languages and cultures. The chapter begins with a discussion of person reference and how this is achieved in Marra and Kriol. This lays the foundation for the more specific discussion of kinship and kin terminology, a major component of person reference. Person reference – and the use of kinterms – conveys the "specifics of cultural principles for categorising and naming persons” (Stivers, Enfield and Levinson 2007: 1). Thus by comparing the systems of person reference (and more specifically, kinship and kin terminology) in Marra and Kriol, we gather evidence about cultural change and maintenance occurring through processes of language shift.

After introducing the topic of person reference (§5.1), I discuss features of person reference in Marra and Kriol. The ‘classical’ kinship system of Marra people is discussed in detail, reviewing the documented information on kin terminology and kin categories used by Marra speakers (§5.2). Section 5.3 looks at the ‘contemporary’ kinship system of Marra people, that is, the kinship of Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, surveying Kriol kinterms and the categories they encode and comparing it to the Marra system. Section 5.4 investigates some specific aspects of Marra kinship systems and how they are manifested in Kriol, specifically: possessed kinterms, dyadic kinterms and skewing. Section 5.5 examines self-reciprocal kinterms and discusses in detail recent innovations that Kriol speakers have made in developing a system of self-reciprocals. These innovations have involved adopting ‘auxiliary’ kinterms from other Aboriginal languages and adapting them for new purposes. Section 5.5 also broadly discusses the etymology of Kriol kinterms and the role that Marra plays in those etymologies. Section 5.6 returns to person reference more broadly, looking at the use of kinterms in discourse in Kriol and Marra and how speakers of both languages use kinterms and kinship in politeness strategies.

5.1  **PERSON REFERENCE**

Research into person reference intersects anthropology, semantics, pragmatics and the ways in which language systems achieve reference generally. As described in Stivers, Enfield et al. (2007), languages can be categorised as preferring "absolute" systems of
person reference (e.g. using names) or "relative" frames of reference which includes a preference for using kinterms as a means of achieving person reference. Given that cultural principles are evidenced in the ways in which languages categorise people and achieve person reference, the observations made in this chapter will provide insights into cultural features encoded by person reference methods in Kriol and Marra and which features are shared and which are not.

Although it is commonly understood that Aboriginal languages like Marra tend towards using relative frames of person reference, it should be noted that this is not necessarily a universal feature of small language communities. Senft (2007) discusses person reference among speakers of Kiliwila, an Austronesian language of the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea. There, people typically have three names: a patrilineal name, a matrilineal name and a baptism name and these names are how person reference of 3rd persons is usually achieved. Kinterms are a "minimal method" (i.e. typically a single expression) of referring to 3rd persons (Senft 2007: 314). The 5000 inhabitants of Bequia in the Grenadines (Caribbean) are likewise more likely to use names to achieve person reference over other methods such as using kin terms (Sidnell 2007). Similarly, Levinson finds that on Rossel Island, the 4000 speakers of the Papuan language Yélî Dnye use names to achieve person reference ahead of the "secondary specification[s]" of kinship or place although reference by kin term is also common (2007: 38–40). Given these instances of small communities preferring absolute systems and the use of names over relative terms, we cannot assume that the relative frames of reference used by Marra speakers described below will be adhered to by Kriol speakers just because they are members of similarly small language communities.

Speakers of traditional Australian Aboriginal languages, however, are well-known for the dominant use of kinterms in person reference. Early anthropologists such as Stanner noted that among Aboriginal people of the now Kriol-dominant Daly River region of the Top End, "personal names ... broadly speaking, are not used as terms of address" and that "names are often to be discovered only with difficulty" (1937: 301). He found that "by far the most common substitute term for personal names are the terms which express the kinship relationship of the speaker to the person spoken to or about" (ibid: 307). Much more recently but in the same geographic region, Blythe’s analysis of Murrinh Patha interactions finds similarly that "kinship is placed front and centre" and that "it is likely that for any conversation, each individual may be associated, as kin, to the present conversationalists" (Blythe 2010: 465–466).
The most detailed analysis of person reference among speakers of an Australian language is by Garde (2008a; 2013) who describes the complex strategies employed by speakers of the Bininj Gunwok languages of Western Arnhem Land. Like Blythe, he notes an emphasis on circumspection and association which are usually of secondary importance when referring to people (following the primary principles of recognition and minimisation, see Sacks and Schegloff 2007). Garde notes that “the use of proper names as the unmarked referring formulation is restricted to a narrow range of contexts” (2008a: 205). Instead, Bininj Gunwok speakers are culturally motivated to use a range of strategies including the frequent use of kinterms to achieve person reference.

5.1.1 PERSON REFERENCE IN MARRA

There is no evidence to suggest that Marra speakers are any different to speakers of other Australian languages in limiting the use of proper names in person reference, leading to a prevalence of the use of kinterms. This is apparent across the recordings made during the documentation of Marra that accompanied this study, as well as in previous Marra documentation.

Among the texts documented by Heath are two short anecdotes provided by Mack Riley, recalling recent humorous adventures (Riley in Heath 1981: 376–379). In Banjo and The Bald Man, Riley describes how he and Banjo took two white men crocodile hunting. One of the white men burned himself on the fire, causing confusion that ultimately resulted in Banjo mistaking the second white man for a ghost. In that narrative, aside from pronominal referencing, the non-Indigenous people are referred to only by the descriptor munanga. Banjo is never referred to by name; in addition to pronouns, he is referred to only by the human noun jawulba 'old man'.

Mack Riley's other humorous tale, Running out of Petrol at Sea, involves Mack and two others embarking on a hunting trip that required an unusual degree of resourcefulness. The narrative commences with Riley naming the other actors (Lindsay and Bulga) in a way not dissimilar to a language in which person reference is commonly achieved with proper names. Once the action of the narrative begins to unfold, one of the actors, Lindsay, is referred to three times as an individual: once when he sighted an island, again when he harpoons a turtle and again when he fashions an impromptu sail. In all three instances Riley's referring expressions do not disambiguate which of the previously named actors is involved (it is only made clear through Heath’s translation). In the first instance, Lindsay is referred to as nani nanya narrgul 'this other one', secondly by pronoun only and thirdly, again as nani narrgul 'the other one'.
However, the above examples are not drawn from interactional talk, but rather from Riley documenting narratives with a linguist who occupies a position outside his normal social sphere. In contrast, much of my Marra documentation was done with groups of people of the same kinship/social networks with much shared history. These recordings contain significant portions of conversational and interactional data and in many of the recordings kin terms are often used in person reference. An example of this is found in Appendix 7 which, although being an oral history narrative of Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi, is not a monologue but rather a co-constructed narrative that was instigated by fellow Marra elder Freda Roberts. The narrative that follows is interactional, told by Fanny but with frequent instances of co-construction and adjacency pairing with Freda, as well as some minor input and confirmanions from a third party, Fanny’s brother Henry. Henry is referred to by his sister (the primary narrator) only once, with the demonstrative *nana ninya* ‘this one’ (in (5.1)). Recognition is assisted by Marra having gender-marked articles and demonstratives:

(5.1) *nana ninya mingi gal-wanga*

In this instance, taboo restrictions are a factor, limiting the potential for Fanny to refer to her brother by name. Other examples of person reference in the narrative do not have this limitation. Even when she has freedom to use names in person reference, Fanny frequently uses kin terms, often using Freda as an anchor by which she triangulates person references with kin terms:

(5.2) FN: *album-ngamindini nana gagamarr*

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In (5.2), Fanny refers to three individuals; each time using another person through with she triangulates the kinterm. The first kinterm, gagamarr, ‘your mother’s mother’ is triangulated through Freda, her main interlocutor. The second kinterm, ganarrinya ‘his/her father’ is triangulated through a 3rd person, while the last one, murimuri nuwugi ‘your (PL) father’s father’, also appears to be triangulated through Freda. As an outsider, I was and still remain unclear as to who all these referents are, yet recognition was apparently achieved by all.

As for the use of names to achieve reference, as has been found with other Australian languages, in Marra this is typically a marked way of referring to people. The markedness of such references is indicated in (5.3), taken from Topsy Numamurdirdi’s oral history which is reproduced in full in Appendix 6:

(5.3) FR: Ni-galuni wala wul-agagurr? Marluy?
2SG-have:PST;CONT the[PL] PL-child nothing
Did you have children [at the time]? Or not?

FN: Nana nanggaya balwayi, wu-galuni na.
the[M] that[M] big 3SG-have:PST;CONT now
She (only) had the big one (eldest one) then

TN: Mingi nga-galuni nana nanggaya balwayi.
then 1SG-have:PST;CONT the[M] that[M] big
I had the eldest one at that time

FR: Gabu, nyiyin warr-wa.
INTERJ name speak_name-2SG;(-ganjii);IMP
Say the name.

TN: Manjayu. ((sorrowful exclamations))
[personal_name]
Manjayu.

In (5.3), the use of the personal name at the conclusion of the extract is not for recognitional purposes. The conversation participants already knew that the referent was the narrator’s eldest son. It appears as though Topsy is asked to utter the personal name as an addendum precisely because the use of personal names is marked and culturally significant. The markedness of using names is further evidenced by the quiet mournful exclamations uttered by Topsy after providing the name.

A more thorough analysis of person reference in Marra is outside the scope of this thesis, but there is no evidence to suggest it varies significantly from how it is done in other Australian languages, as described by scholars such as Garde (2013) and Blythe (2010).
The following section discusses person reference in Kriol, providing evidence of how two languages on either side of language shift perform related pragmatic functions.

5.1.2 PERSON REFERENCE IN KRIOL

The ways in which Kriol speakers achieve person reference appear to correspond closely to methods used by speakers of traditional languages, indeed, “in significantly different ways to Anglo English speakers” (Nicholls 2009: 166). Nicholls offers a summary of person reference in Roper Kriol, attesting at least eleven methods. Although the frequency of each method was not quantified in detail, Nicholls found that using kin terms was the most common way Kriol speakers achieved person reference based on a sample of 138 tokens taken from conversational data (Nicholls 2009: 176). The person reference methods Nicholls found that Kriol speakers used were:

1. Bare kin terms (e.g. *baba* ‘sibling’)
2. Possessed kin terms (e.g. *yunmi baba* ‘our sibling’)
3. Human status nouns (e.g. *olgamen* ‘respected older woman’)
4. Indefinite pronouns (e.g. *najawan* ‘the other one/somebody else’)
5. Nicknames
6. English or Aboriginal names
7. Surnames
8. Placenames or personal names with collective suffix –mob (e.g. *Wuyagiba-mob* ‘[placename]-mob’, *Lansen-mob* ‘[surname]-mob’)
9. Descriptions
10. Demonstrative pronouns (e.g. *tha’nja* ‘that one there’)
11. Body part terms (e.g. *binji* ‘stomach’ to refer to child/ren)

Nicholls suggests that additional strategies would be used and further research will undoubtedly sharpen the analysis. For example, in my interviews with Kriol speakers, two young women described three additional methods, which they use to refer to taboo kin:

1. Teknonymy, i.e. using children’s names to refer to parents:

   (5.4) **If** mela don wan gulu dediwan neim mela
   
   tok, **“ah ba Ketrina dedi”**
   
   If we don’t want to say a father’s name, we say, "oh, Katrina’s dad.”
2. Using initials:

(5.5) AH:  
\[ \begin{align*} 
& Ai \quad \text{nomo} \quad \text{gulu} \quad \text{det} \quad \text{sambidi} \quad \text{neim}. \quad \text{Mi} \quad \text{gulu} \\
& 1SG \quad \text{NEG} \quad \text{call:TR} \quad \text{the} \quad \text{someone} \quad \text{name} \quad 1SG \quad \text{call:TR} \\
& Em-fei, \; ee? \\
& \text{“MJ” TAG} \\
& \text{I don’t say that (taboo kin) person’s name. I say “MJ”, don’t I?} \\
\end{align*} \]

DR:  
\[ \begin{align*} 
& ba \quad \text{Mario} \\
& \text{PURP [Name]} \\
& \text{for Mario} \\
\end{align*} \]

AH:  
\[ \begin{align*} 
& en \quad \text{im} \quad \text{gulu’ mi} \quad \text{baba} \\
& \text{and 3SG call:TR 1SG sibling} \\
& \text{and he calls me ‘baba’ (i.e. we are in a taboo kin relationship)} \\
\end{align*} \]

Note that in the above example, DR assists with recognition by using the personal name of the person under discussion which AH is intentionally avoiding because of cultural taboos surrounding using the name of cross-sex siblings. As a way of explanation (rather than person reference) AH subsequently makes explicit the relationship with the person being referred to – im gulu mi baba ‘he calls me sister/sibling’ – informing me as to why she does not use his name.

A third technique described uses a combination of teknonymy and description:

(5.6) “aa \quad ba \quad Traisin mami, \; \text{det} \quad \text{sambodi} \quad ja \quad \text{wek la} \; \text{hospil”}, \\
\text{ah \; POSS [name] mother the \; someone \; there \; work \; LOC health_centre} \\
\text{Thei \; tok \; la’t, \; ngabi! (laughs)} \\
\text{health_centre 3PL say thus \; AFFIRM} \\
\text{“Ah, Trysean’s mother, that (taboo kin) person there who works at the health centre’. They talk like that, don’t they!”} \\

The example used in (5.6) combines two methods: (1) culturally-informed circumspection (teknonymy to avoid naming a taboo relative) and (2) description to facilitate recognition. The reference to the person’s vocation allows the listener to determine one individual from dozens of classificatory kin that Trysean calls mami ‘mother’. Such methods of achieving person reference adhere to a cultural-based
motivation of avoiding the use of a name while still achieving recognition, and the use of kinterm is central to achieving both goals.

The information available on person reference in Kriol indicates significant consistencies with how this is done in Marra and other Aboriginal languages. Central and prototypical to achieving person reference in these languages is the use of kinterms. The bulk of the remainder of this chapter considers person reference through the narrower lens of kin terminology, considering kinterms used and the kinship categories encoded by Marra and Kriol speakers and the consistencies and inconsistencies evidenced across the two languages.

5.2 KINTERMS AND KINSHIP IN MARRA

The description of Marra kinterms and kinship systems provided here is based primarily on existing literature (Heath 1981; Merlan and Heath 1982). I consider these descriptions a "classical" analysis which looks upon kinship in Marra as a system unaffected by other languages (especially Kriol and English) and cultural change. Recent fieldwork with Marra speakers took place more than three decades since Heath's fieldwork and during this time Kriol – and to a lesser extent, English – has continued to supplant the use of Marra in daily discourses of Marra-speaking people. Recent fieldwork with the last fluent Marra speakers indicates some rustiness in Marra speaker's abilities to maintain the rigour of the kinship system and terminology described by Heath (see e.g. §5.4.3 on dyadic expressions). In this section, I will first provide an overview of "classical" Marra kinship (as per Heath etc.), describing the kin categories that are encoded by kinterms. I then compare this with the set of kinterms and kin categories now used by (non-Marra speaking) Marra people and other Kriol speakers in Ngukurr.

Heath also described a number of noteworthy features of Marra kinship and kin terminology, including:

- Skewing along a small number of patrilines
- Each kinship category having a set of 4 forms: a vocative form and three forms encoding possession for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person
- Partially or wholly suppletive paradigms across the vocative and three possessed forms for some kinship categories
- Dyadic kinterms, including 'intrusive' dyads that fill gaps in sets of simple kinterms.
These distinctive features of kinship in Marra – and how they are represented in the contemporary situation in which Kriol dominates – will be discussed in §5.4.

5.2.1 Kin categories in Marra

This section reviews the kin categories that Marra speakers encode via basic kinterms in their language. The information is drawn heavily from Heath’s description of Marra kinship (Heath 1981) and is supported by evidence gathered through recent Marra documentation conducted during this study. In this section I do not discuss semi-moieties (which are rarely used in person reference) which were the topic of a series of several anthropological articles in the 1960s and 70s (Heath 1978d; 1980d; Maddock 1979), although these are addressed in §5.4.2 below. It should also be acknowledged that although the discussion that follows describes kinterms as representing affinal and consanguineal kin categories, the terms described also extend to classificatory kin. Thus, when generation levels are mentioned, it should be remembered that classificatory kin assigned to those ‘generations’ may not be of a similar age to the consanguineal kin typically found in those generations or kin categories. In simpler terms, where I refer to a kin category like ‘mother’s mother’, for example, that will include people of the same age or younger (to ego) who are classed within the ‘mother’s mother’ category.

Simple kin terms in Marra are inflected for gender of the referent; masculine forms are unmarked and feminine forms are prefixed with n- (in singular nominative referential forms), as in:

(5.7) ngaya ngana n-ganggurlld

that[F] the[F] F-DaDa[1]

That’s my granddaughter.

This prefix, however, is usually only clearly realised in connected speech, particularly following a vowel, as shown in (5.7). In (5.8), where the second iteration of mimi ‘FaMo’ is preceded by a short pause, the feminine prefix is indistinct or dropped:

(5.8) ngina ngaba n-mimi gayarra. (0.5) ngayarra guymi (0.2) mimi.

1SG and F-FaMo[1] there there[F] north FaMo[1]

Me and my maternal grandmother there, she who is there in the north, my grandmother.

Phonetically, the n- is only clearly realised in connected speech and may not be otherwise audible. Example 5.7 would be realised as /ŋajaŋanangulu/.
As Heath points out, in Marra “there are no terminological equations crossing the boundaries among the four patrilines” (Heath 1981: 97), thus the grandparental generation consists of four kin categories: mimi ‘FaMo’, bijaja ‘MoFa’, murirdi ‘FaFa’ and gugu ‘MoMo’, each (as mentioned above) with a feminine form prefixed with n-.

Correspondingly, grandchildren are categorised four ways. From a man’s perspective, his son’s children are (n-)murirdi and his daughter’s children are (n-)gambirrddi, while he refers to his sister’s grandchildren as (n-)ganggurldi (SiDaCh) and (n-)dilingardi (SiSoCh). From a woman’s perspective, her daughter’s children are (n-)dilingardi, while her son’s children are (n-)ganggurldi. She refers to her brother’s grandchildren as (n-)murirdi (BrSoCh) and (n-)gambirrddi (BrDaCh).

Note that across the eight categories representing grandparents and grandchildren, there is only one instance of the generational distinction being neutralised by a self-reciprocal kinterm: (n-)murirdi which refers to both FaFa/FaFaSi and SoCh/BrSoCh. The remaining six kinterms encode distinct categories and are not used self-reciprocally.
Kinterms in other generations (same generation, parental generation and child’s generation) regularly contain distinct gendered forms. On the father’s side, three distinctions are made: (1) *ngalurru* ‘father + father’s younger brothers’, (2) *birnirdi* ‘father’s older brothers’ and (3) *barnarna* ‘father’s sisters’:

![Figure 5-3: Marra referential kinterms on father’s side](image)

These distinctions are paralleled on the mother’s side with the kinterms *n-gajirri* ‘mother + mother’s younger sisters’, *n-ngajamu* ‘mother’s older sisters’ and *gardigardi* ‘mother’s brothers’.

![Figure 5-4: Marra referential kinterms on mother’s side](image)

A distinction in birth order is also made when referring to kin of the same generation, where older siblings are called *(n-)baba* while younger siblings are *nirrija/n-nga-nirrija*. Cross-cousins are referred to as *(n-)munyumunyu*. 
This distinction is carried through to the children's generation where the children of
(n-)baba and ego are terminologically differentiated from the children of (n-nga-)nirrija. A terminological conflation does occur across generations though, because the children of a man's nirrija 'younger brother' are terminologically indistinct from his father's older brother; both categories are called birnirdi (see Figures 5–3 and 5–6). While these two types of birnirdi may seem somewhat loosely associated, they are linked in that they belong to the same semi-moiety and would also belong to the same subsection. (Subsections were known to Marra people but not as functionally prominent as semi-moieties.)

Figure 5–6 shows that the other categories in a man's children's generation are distinguished by gender. The children of a man and his baba 'older brothers' are nijari (male) and n-ngayiyardi (female) while his sister's children are nibari (male) and n-ngayiwardi (female).

A Marra-speaking woman would, like men, refer to her father's older brothers as birnirdi (as in Figure 5–3) but, unlike men, would not refer to anyone in her child's generation with this name (see Figure 5–7). This can be better understood again by looking at the semi-moiety membership: whereas a man's younger brothers' children (birnirdi) are in the same semi-moiety as himself and his father's brothers (also birnirdi), a woman's
brothers’ children are in a different semi-moiety to her birnirdi. Instead, her younger (and older) brothers’ children are referred to as nijari (male) and n-ngayiyardi (female). Her own children and those of her older sisters are (n-)dalngardi while her younger sisters’ children are (n-)ngajamu. The daughters of a woman’s older sister (n-ngajamu) are terminologically identical to her mother’s older sister.

![Figure 5-7: Marra referential kinterms in child’s generation (female EGO)](image)

Kinterms for referring to affinal kin (or ‘in-laws’) are terminologically complicated by the intrusion of dyadic kinterms into the system of basic kinterms. For example, spouses are referred to as nirri-maygurla where maygurla is also attested as a dyadic kinterm referring to a husband-and-wife pair. These ‘intrusive’ dyads are discussed further in §5.4.3.

Although affinal kinterms are more morphologically complex and include dyads, Heath (1981: 106–110) found it possible to determine eight affinal categories as follows:

- Spouse: where both men and women use the term nirri-maygurla
- Younger brother’s wife (male EGO)/Husband’s elder brother (female EGO): nirri-mayanggayi (a self-reciprocal kinterm)
- Two terms used by men to distinguish an older brother-in-law (wumbarnardi) from a younger brother-in-law (mimirdi)
- A kinterm, nirri-manggigarranga, used by women to refer to their sister-in-law(s)
- Mother-in-law: n-nga-narrjarlanga
- Mother-in-laws’ brother(s): muluri, and
- A kinterm that anomalously has only one referent (i.e. not applied to classificatory kin): lambarra which is used to refer to one’s own father-in-law

With the inclusion of affinal kinterms and intrusive dyads, Heath identified forty-five kin categories that Marra speakers codified with a distinct kinterms (or rather, sets of
kinterms, as per §5.4.1). A number of these forty-five sets/categories are near-duplicates, distinguished by gender and marked minimally with the addition or lack of feminine gender morphology, which comprises only the prefix n-. If these minimally marked gender distinctions are conflated and considered to be a single category (identifiable by a common root form of the kinterm) then the number of distinct categories is reduced to twenty-seven. The following section introduces the Kriol kinship system and compares it with the Marra system described above.

5.3 KINTERMS AND KINSHIP IN KRIOL

The Marra people who contributed to this study, as well as those who informed Heath’s analysis summarised above, were not Kriol speakers in their early years. It can be assumed that they acquired the Marra system without significant interference from the emerging creole which they learned as an additional language as children or young adults, after having lived their early years on Marra country, speaking primarily Marra (see §2.4 for more on the sociohistorical context of this era). For this group, contact with emerging creole speakers would not have been permanent until they started significant interactions with mission residents or moved permanently to the mission. It is not known how the emerging creole system clashed or corresponded with the pre-contact Marra system, nor is it known how the emerging creole system was formed or differed to the English system as it developed. The situation today is that all Marra people, at least in Ngukurr, use a kinship system that is shared by all Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. Marra speakers readily differentiate between the core components and kinterms used in their own language and generally can competently map one system onto the other. The Kriol system does demonstrate a number of adaptations – as well as perpetuations – which are described here.

Kin terminology in Roper Kriol (or other varieties) has not been comprehensively described in the literature. Among Sandefur’s many works, he does not appear to have specifically considered kin terminology. For example, his basic grammar (1979) – still the best grammatical description of Kriol to date – does not address kinterms, although several feature throughout the example sentences. Sharpe’s trilingual Alawa-Kriol-English dictionary (2001a) attempts a complete list but some obvious omissions are evident such as father’s mother and mother-in-law. Hudson’s description of Fitzroy Valley Kriol and semantic comparison to substrates turns to kinterms briefly but discusses only ten: siblings, parents, parent’s siblings and their children (1983: 139–140). Munro is one of the more recent scholars to have researched Roper Kriol (Munro 2004; 2011) but does not address kinterms. The pan-dialectal *Kriol Dikshenri* developed
by the Summer Institute of Linguistics and subsequently by Lee (2004; SIL-IAAB 1986) attempts a more comprehensive catalogue of kinterms used. The pan-dialectal dictionary encompasses four Kriol varieties, including Roper Kriol, making it possible to determine which kinterms are claimed to pertain to Ngukurr/Roper Kriol. This results in a list of around fifty but in reviewing the entries it is possible to identify problems: some terms mentioned are now obsolete in contemporary Roper Kriol (e.g. ngabirnirni, abijaja), some terms are described as Roper Kriol kinterms but, while they may be known by Kriol speakers at Ngukurr, they are used more frequently by speakers of the Barunga variety of Kriol (e.g. mula, gaggag). A final problem is that some kinterms attested in contemporary Roper Kriol, described in this chapter, do not appear or are not defined as kinterms in the current version of the Kriol Diksheni.

The most recent attempt at describing Roper Kriol kin terminology is provided by Nicholls (2009: 64). Nicholls, like Munro, used a corpus of Kriol recordings for her research that included narrative and conversational data gathered predominantly from elderly speakers. As a result, this data risks not comprehensively capturing contemporary Roper Kriol and recent innovations evident in the Kriol of young adults in Ngukurr. Nicholls’ summary of contemporary kinship and kinterms in Roper Kriol is based on the overview given in Kriol courses that were presented by the regional language centre (Diwurrwurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation 2006). The set of kinterms she presents is similar to the set described here but I have endeavoured to extend glosses for each kinterm so they comprehensively capture the full range of kin relationships denoted. An overview of the core system of Kriol kinterms and kin categories is provided below (§5.3.1) and is discussed in relation to the Marra terms and categories. An extended list of Kriol kinterms is provided in Appendix 11, including additional kinterms considered to be ‘auxiliary’ kinterms plus notes on their usage (generally restricted) and pragmatics.

5.3.1 KIN CATEGORIES IN KRIOL: MARRA AND KRIOL COMPARED

In the grandparental generation, Heath describes four categories used by Marra speakers: father’s mother and father and mother’s mother and father. Within those categories, gender is distinguished minimally with only the feminine prefix n-. The Kriol system also has the same four categories, as shown in Figure 5–8.71

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71 In Figures 5–8 to 5–12, Marra kinterms are italicised in lighter type while Kriol kinterms are given in the second row and bolded.
Here we see a continuation in kinship categories across the shift from Marra to Kriol; apart from the loss of gender marking morphology, the distinctions are identical. Some of the Kriol forms are also related, which is discussed further in §5.5.4.

It was noted above that Marra speakers make a similar four-way distinction in the grandchild generation (see Figure 5–2). Again, this distinction is maintained by Kriol speakers as shown in Figure 5–9:

Although the grandchild kin categories used by Kriol speakers correspond to the Marra system, there is a key difference in that all the Kriol terms are self-reciprocal. In the Marra system only \((n\text{-})\text{murirdi}\) is self-reciprocal. This is an adaptation discussed further in §5.5.

In the parental generation, we saw above that the Marra lexicon distinguishes three categories on both the father’s side and mother’s side (six categories in total). On both sides, the parent and their younger same-sex siblings are collapsed into a single category,
while older same-sex siblings and cross-sex siblings are both distinguished (see Figures 5–3 and 5–4). In the Kriol lexicon, these categories have been partially maintained: the distinction between same-sex siblings and cross-sex siblings of parents is maintained, but the age-based distinctions of parents’ same-sex siblings are not marked with a suppletive distinction as in Marra. This is shown in Figure 5–10 which shows kin terminology on the mother’s side:

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 5–10: Referential kinterms on mother’s side: Marra and Kriol compared**

Here we see the kin categories encoded by *n-ngajamu* and *n-gajirri* in Marra conflated to *mami* in Kriol. This is replicated on the father’s side where *birnirdi* ‘father’s elder brothers’ and *ngalurru* ‘father + father’s younger brothers’ are conflated to *dedi* in Kriol. The Marra kinterm *n-barnarna* corresponds with the Kriol *anti* ‘father’s sister’. It is worth noting, though, that Kriol speakers commonly delineate these kin categories according to age or order of birth by modifying the kinterm with the adjectives *bigwan* ‘older (lit: big)’ or *lilwan* ‘younger (lit: little)’, however the lexicon does not cause this distinction to be made compulsorily.

The pattern of examples showing a combination of maintenance and conflation continues through to categories and kinterms used at the same generation level. Kriol speakers have maintained the cross-cousin distinction (*barn.ga* or *kas*) but the order of birth distinction among siblings is not encoded compulsorily in the lexicon. Where Marra speakers distinguish their older siblings (*n*)-baba) from younger ones (*n*)-nga-nirrija), Kriol speakers apply *baba* to all siblings, regardless of gender, as shown in Figure 5–11. Again, age or birth order distinctions are readily available to Kriol speakers with the modifiers *bigwan/lilwan*. 
In addition to the terms given above, there are other, more marked, terms used among people in the same generation to refer to siblings and sibling-in-laws. For example, men can refer to their sisters as *rabish* (from ‘rubbish’) which connotes the avoidance relationship that cross-sex siblings have. This term is not used as a vocative, though, and is used mostly by adults, hence it is a marked kinterm, unlike *baba* and others discussed in this section. (Other ‘marked’ kinterms are listed in Appendix 11.)

Looking at the children’s generation, we saw in the previous section that Marra speakers carry the age-based distinction of siblings through to their offspring where, for example, the children of a man’s older brother (*baba*) are referred to by the same kinterms as his own children, but the children of his *nirrija* (younger brother) are referred to as *(n-*)birnirdi. Kriol speakers do not compulsorily mark this distinction among their siblings, nor among their sibling’s children. Instead, as Figure 5–12 shows, all children of same-sex siblings are referred to as one’s own children are: with the English-derived kinterms *san* and *dota* (‘son’ and ‘daughter’). The terms *nis* and *nefyu* (‘niece’ and ‘nephew’) are reserved for the children of opposite sex siblings.
Figure 5–12 suggests that the Kriol system has both maintained and collapsed aspects of the Marra system: a man’s sister’s children are still distinguished from brothers’ children, while the distinction between (n-)birnirdi ‘older brother’s children’ and the children of other brothers is no longer lexically encoded. However, when we consider the system from both a male and female ego, there is an interesting point of difference. In Marra, men and women both have kin in the children’s generation who they call nijari and ngayiyardi (see Figures 5–6 and 5–7). For a woman these are her brother’s children, but for a man they are his own children and those of his elder brother(s). In the Kriol system the categories seem to have been split: A man’s nijari and ngayiyardi are called san and dota, while a woman’s nijari and ngayiyardi are her nis and nefyu.72

Turning to affinal kin, the Marra system involves the use of dyads intruding into the basic kinterm system (as already mentioned). This is not attested in Kriol. Several components of the Marra system are paralleled in Kriol: mother-in-law (Marra: n-nga-narrjarlanga, Kriol: gajin), her brother (Marra and Kriol: muluri) and father-in-law (Marra and Kriol: lambarra). The spousal category in Marra, nirri-maygurla, is encoded with gendered English-based kinterms: hasben ‘husband’ and waif ‘wife’. Among sibling-in-law categories, significant conflations are evident. The Marra system consists of four separate kinterms that are encoded with the Kriol kinterm banji ‘sibling-in-law’. Where Marra speakers differentiate gender in this category, the Kriol system does not. In Marra, women and men also use different terms for sibling-in-laws of the same gender and men further distinguish two categories according to age. None of these distinctions are evident in basic kinterms used by Kriol speakers. Finally, with regard to affinal kinterms in Kriol and Marra, there is a difference in the application of the kinterm lambarra ‘father-in-law’ which occurs in both languages: Heath claims that for Marra speakers this typically has only one referent (1981: 109), but Kriol speakers readily apply the term to classificatory kin.

5.4 MORE ON MARRA KINSHIP: VOCATIVES, DYADS, SKEWING AND OTHER DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The previous sections outlined and compared basic kinterms in Marra and Kriol and the categories they encode. The comparison of the two systems revealed examples of distinctions being maintained across the language shift boundary, examples of categories

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72 However as shown in §5.5.3, the recently introduced kinterm gudi covers both the male and female-centric versions of nijari/ngayiyardi.
being conflated (though usually with the possibility of those categories being expressed in Kriol with modifying adjectives) and some minor examples of expansion or complication of categories in the move towards the Kriol system. This section moves on to examine aspects of the kin terminology used by Marra and Kriol speakers that are beyond the system of basic kin terms and categories. Three main areas are surveyed: (1) the lexical complexity of basic kinterms in Marra where each category can be represented by four lexical forms (vocative and possessed forms for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person), (2) skewed kinterms in Marra and (3) dyadic kinterms.

5.4.1 Vocative and possessed referential forms of Marra kinterms

One of the distinctive features of Marra kinterms is that each kin category is not represented by one basic kinterm (as perhaps implied by §5.2) but rather each category is represented by four forms: three referential forms that incorporate possession (encompassing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person) as well as a vocative form. In some cases, the distinctions are created with quite regular inflectional morphology with the use of a 2nd person possessive suffix -marr and 3rd person -nganja. But the phenomenon cannot be considered simply as a morphological process due to the high proportion of wholly or partially suppletive paradigms. The table below (extracted from Heath 1981:115–117) provides examples demonstrating the range of possibilities: (1) a ‘regular’ paradigm using only morphology (pertaining to the kin category ‘mother’s mother’s brother’), (2) a partially-suppletive series (‘younger brother’), and (3) a fully suppletive series (‘older brother’):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kin category</th>
<th>Regular series</th>
<th>Partially suppletive</th>
<th>Fully suppletive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘mother’s</td>
<td>‘younger brother’</td>
<td>‘older brother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mother’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mother’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>brother’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocative form</td>
<td>gugu</td>
<td>limbili</td>
<td>baba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person referential</td>
<td>gugu</td>
<td>nirrija</td>
<td>baba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person referential</td>
<td>gagamarr</td>
<td>dajumarr</td>
<td>lalumarr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person referential</td>
<td>gaganganja</td>
<td>dajunganja or</td>
<td>ngurlunggal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dangan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–1: Examples of vocative and possessed kinterms in Marra, showing regular and suppletive paradigms

With this series of forms available for each kin category, Marra speakers do not require possessive pronouns to achieve person reference when using kinterms, as in the use of baba ‘older brother’ in (5.9):
Note that in (5.9), both the Kriol and English translations show the kinterm modified with a possessive pronoun, whereas in the original utterance possession was marked by the form of the kinterm (Table 5–1 above shows the alternative forms indicating 2nd and 3rd person possession: lalumarr and ngurlunggal). An example that uses a morphologically-derived possessed form is given in (5.2) above where the kinterm gagamarr is used referring to the mother’s mother of the addressee (i.e. 2nd person possessed).

A longer example is given in (5.10), drawn from a discussion between two Marra speakers about players in the local football team. In this example, three kinterms are used, referring to three separate individuals. In two instances, the 1st person possessed forms are used and in one case the 3rd person possessed form is used. In each instance, possession is not marked by morphology:

(5.10) Yi, nanggayarri, nanggayirribanga du, gana gar-ama, nanggayya dilingardi Mario, en i...

Yuwai, tharran-, im na, im plei (futbol) du, det main abuji Mario, en... main san weya imin groimap im thanja, det... det bla im mami na bin libum im. [KRIOL]

Yes, that- him is well, he plays (football), my grandson Mario, and... my son, he reared him, he did, the... his mother, she left him. [ENGLISH]
Heath tabulated the paradigms of vocative and possessed forms that relate to the forty-five kin categories that are lexically encoded in Marra (1981: 115–120). Table 5–2 quantifies these kin categories according to whether the paradigms of possessed kin terms are regular, partially suppletive (two distinct forms) or substantially suppletive (more than two distinct forms). Eight of the categories could not be quantified as they are lexicalised by intrusive dyads which were briefly mentioned in §5.2.1. Table 5.2 also distinguishes between the full set of forty-five kin categories listed by Heath and a reduced set that collapses categories that are minimally varied with the only difference being the feminine prefix \( n- \) (or lack thereof, to mark masculine gender):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular paradigm</th>
<th>Partially suppletive</th>
<th>Substantially or fully suppletive</th>
<th>Categories encoded by dyads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All categories (N=45)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced set after collapsing minimally marked gender distinctions (( n- ) feminine prefix vs. null) (N=27)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5–2: Quantification of Marra kin categories by type of possessed kinterm paradigm*

As described above and demonstrated in examples (5.9) and (5.10), the prevalence of suppletion in Marra kin term paradigms suggests that it is more than a morphological process with some irregularity. Table 5–2 shows that the majority of kin categories are encoded by paradigms of possessed kin terms that utilise at least two distinct monomorphemic or unrelated forms.

Inflected or monomorphemic possessed kin terms are not found in Kriol. As demonstrated by the Kriol translations provided in (5.9) and (5.10), possessive constructions with kin terms use modifiers such as possessive pronouns. Nicholls (2009: 170–171) provides several naturally-occurring examples of this. In Kriol, possessive constructions with kin terms do not differ morphologically or syntactically to other possessive constructions. Again, this is shown by Nicholls in her summary of possession constructions in Kriol (2009: 84–88). My own fieldwork provided further examples from young Kriol speakers showing that possession is marked on kin terms and other nouns in the same way. In (5.11) and (5.12), the same prepositional possessive construction [preposition+possessive pronoun+possessed] is used in relation to kin (\( mami \) ‘mother’) and an inanimate object (\( kemp \) ‘house’):
In addition to the possessed forms already described, kin categories in Marra also have vocative forms. Typically, these are identical to or minimally variant to the 1st person form, but this is not always the case. This is seen in Table 5–1 where two of the paradigms shown have identical forms in the vocative and 1st person possessed slots, but in the paradigm for younger brother the vocative form *limbili* is unrelated to the other forms in the paradigm (*nirrija*, *dajumarr*, *dajunganja/dangan*). Other kin categories have vocative forms that are related to the possessed kinterms but often differ to various degrees. An example is the father’s father category where the vocative form *murimuri* is a reduplication of the stem found in the otherwise regular series of possessed forms: *murirdi/murimmarr/muringanja*. For some categories, the vocative form is identical to the 1st person possessed form, as seen with two of the paradigms offered in Table 5–1. Less than half (20 of 45) of the kin categories described by Heath have vocative forms that are identical to a possessed form. Eleven of these vocatives are fully suppletive to the forms found in the compatible series of possessed kinterms.

Kin categories in Kriol do not have a formal set of vocative forms like that found in Marra, but there are some kin categories that have pragmatically-restricted vocative, generally reserved for peers of the same gender. Two examples relate to the kin categories brother and brother-in-law: the unmarked kinterms for these categories are *baba* or *braja* and *met* or *banji* (respectively). However, men can and do use separate vocative terms when speaking to other men of a similar age of those categories. A brother can be called *blouk* (from the English ‘bloke’) and brother-in-laws are often called *fren* (from ‘friend’). These forms are typically restricted to the vocative usage and, for example, would not normally be possessed as in *bla main blouk/fren ‘my brother/brother-in-law’*. Note that the etymons of these vocatives (‘bloke’ and ‘friend’) are not kinterms in English when not possessed, nor are they used vocatively in English. This is an example of Kriol speakers
utilising non kin-related English lexemes and adapting them for a specific kinship-related use.

Other examples of vocative kinterms in Kriol are simply truncations of the unmarked forms and represent a process more akin to the use of nicknames among young people. For example, when I spent two months in Minyerri in 2004, the trend among young men and male teenagers was to use the vocative *gusi* to refer to their male *gagu* ‘classificatory mother’s mother’s brother (self-reciprocal)’. A more recent trend sees the ‘new’ kinterm *gabarani* (‘uncle’ or ‘nephew’: see §5.5.3 below) often shortened to *gaps* when used vocatively with peers.

### 5.4.2 Skewing

Marra is a member of one of several clusters of languages in discontiguous regions in Australia that demonstrate skewing for certain kinterms. In the Roper River and Western Gulf of Carpentaria region some skewing in kin terminology in exhibited in Marra, Nunggubuyu and Anindilyakwa. Other languages in the area such as Ngandi and Ngalakgan do not demonstrate skewing (McConvell 2012). In Marra, there are four kinterms that demonstrate multigenerational skewing associated with certain patrilines (Heath 1981):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>MoBr Patriline</th>
<th>FaSi Patriline</th>
<th>MoMoBr Patriline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st ascending</td>
<td>MoBr <em>gardigardi</em></td>
<td>Mo <em>gajirri</em></td>
<td>(FaSi <em>barnarna</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>MoBrSo <em>gardigardi</em></td>
<td>MoBrDa <em>gajirri</em></td>
<td>FaSiCh <em>munyumunyu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st descending</td>
<td>MoBrSoSo <em>gardigardi</em></td>
<td>MoBrSoDa <em>gajirri</em></td>
<td>FaSiSoCh <em>munyumunyu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd descending</td>
<td>MoBrSoSoSo <em>gardigardi</em></td>
<td>MoBrSoSoDa <em>gajirri</em></td>
<td>FaSiSoSoCh <em>munyumunyu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial role in relation to EGO</td>
<td><em>junggayi</em></td>
<td><em>junggayi</em></td>
<td><em>junggayi</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5–3: Skewed kinterms in Marra*

This type of skewing is known as Omaha skewing in the kinship literature (see, for example, McConvell 2012). McConvell suggests that a function of skewing in languages like Marra is that it facilitates exogamous marriage patterns and helps “small hunter-gatherer groups such as those in Australia avoid demographic collapse” (2012: 244). Another apparent benefit to the skewing evidenced in Marra is that it provides a
linguistic tool for linking kinterms to the system of patrilineal semi-moieties which is incredibly important to Marra ontology (mentioned briefly in §2.1.2). The four named semi-moieties, or “skin groups” as they are often referred to locally, are Burdal, Guyal, Mambali and Murrungun. They are patrilineal groupings that determine Marra people’s relationships to important aspects of cultural life such as land tenure, ceremonies (songs, performance, roles etc.), totems, and traditional law relating to land, ceremony and totems (Dreamings). The patrilineal skewing in Marra succeeds in increasing the salience of semi-moietiy membership and associated roles into the domains of kin terminology and person reference. Indeed, McConvell (2012) refers to the work of Avery (2002) who suggests that Omaha skewing in Marra is attributable to the importance of patrilineal semi-moieties and the named roles and reciprocal relationships that Marra people have with each other based on semi-moietiy memberships.

The named roles based upon semi-moietiy relationships are junggayi, darlnyin and mingirringgi. Individuals in one’s own semi-moietiy are mingirringgi to each other. Mingirringgi are considered to be a kind of ‘owner’ of any given totem, estate, site etc. In relation to ceremonies, Avery says that mingirringgi “are identified with the Dreamings associated with each local version of the ceremony and perform dances mimetic of those Dreamings within the ritual” (Avery 2002: 226). The common English gloss of mingirringgi – ‘owner’ – belies the fact that they have little independent rights or control over whatever is ‘owned’, unlike the connotations of English senses of ‘ownership’. The actions of mingirringgi are monitored and policed by those in their mother’s semi-moietiy: junggayi. Again, using the example of ceremonies, according to Avery, junggayi “organise the ceremony for them [mingirringgi], producing the sacred objects for the ceremony, decorating the dancers with ochre and down and policing all aspects of the performance” (Avery 2002: 226). The third role/term, darlnyin, is somewhat secondary to the primary roles of mingirringgi and junggayi. Darlnyin are regarded as playing a back-up guardian or custodian role to junggayi and are members of the other two semi-moieties (mother’s mother’s and father’s mother’s). The roles of mingirringgi, junggayi and darlnyin relate not only to higher order cultural phenomena such as ceremonies but also pervade everyday life, including seemingly mundane aspects. In contemporary life in Ngukurr, such roles determine aspects such as which totemic designs are available to local artists to put on commercial artworks and who can contribute to the recording or translation of a traditional story about a particular Dreaming or sacred site. Based on my observations of the pervasive importance of semi-moietiy based roles, my view supports that of Avery in postulating that Omaha skewing in Marra is a useful way to bring semi-
moiety-based roles into the system of basic kinterms, thereby maintaining their prominence and increasing their salience.

Basic kinterms used by L1 Kriol speakers were described in detail in §5.3.1 but there is no evidence of skewing, suggesting that Kriol kin terminology does not foreground important semi-moiety based relationships in the way that skewed kinterms in Marra do. It can be hypothesised that this reflects the de-emphasis and irregularity of higher order ceremonies – and the semi-moiety derived relationships that regulate them – in the lives of Kriol speakers. Indeed, the lives of Kriol speakers in terms of the importance, frequency and patterns of carrying out ceremonies differ to those of their forebears. This area of cultural change which seems quite apparent across the language shift boundary. Traditional ceremonies such as initiation or circumcision ceremonies and higher order ceremonies such as Gunabibi and Yaburduruwa do not take place as frequently or reportedly with the same rigour or discipline as they did when Marra was a more viable language. For example, Marra people rarely, if ever, hold circumcision ceremonies in Ngukurr. A public genre of dance and music, langurr, which was particular to Marra people and their close neighbours, is no longer performed and unknown to younger people. Initiation ceremonies held locally in Ngukurr are typically led by Yolŋu people (in particular Ritharrŋu and Wägilak). Marra boys in Ngukurr will usually go to the neighbouring communities of Numbulwar or Minyerri for a more ‘culturally relevant’ initiation ceremony or may participate in the Yolŋu version locally. Both options have advantages: ceremonial leaders in Numbulwar and Minyerri have stronger ties to Marra culture than the Yolŋu people who lead such ceremonies in Ngukurr, but there are obvious pragmatic advantages in going through such ceremonies locally. In terms of higher order ceremonies, these have been held more frequently in recent years in Ngukurr, indicating perhaps a deliberate move towards actively maintaining them due to a growing awareness that the existence of a critical mass of people with sufficient knowledge to carry them out is under threat.

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that ceremonial life is less salient to Kriol speakers than to senior Marra speakers, or at least has become a relatively smaller component of an expanding social universe. Given that skewing accentuates relationships like junggayi and mingirringgi and patrilineal semi-moiety membership (which come strongly to the fore in ceremonial domains), we could point to a correlation between linguistic and

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73 Langurr was one of the lexemes documented by Capell in his brief Marra wordlist collected in the 1930s or 40s. Capell offered the gloss: ‘(play) corroboree’ (Capell n.d.: 7).
cultural practice: that the absence of skewed kinterms in Kriol reflects shifts away from cultural practices of L1 Marra speakers. Specifically, we can postulate the following correlation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural practice</th>
<th>Linguistic practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1 Marra speakers</td>
<td>Lead, hold and participate in ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skewed kinterms maintain salience of ceremonial relationships such as junggayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Kriol speakers</td>
<td>Rarely lead and hold ceremonies (esp. in Ngukurr) but participate regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of skewed kinterms diminishes the salience of junggayi relationships. Such</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships not as relevant given reduced impact of ceremonial life on daily life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5–4: Possible correlation between language shift, changing ceremonial practices and skewed kinterms*

While this is an appealing hypothesis, there is other evidence that basic kinterms in Kriol have made adaptations that do in fact maintain or increase the salience of semi-moieties and associated roles (i.e. mingirringgi, junggayi and darlnyin). Likewise, there is evidence that despite alterations to ceremonial life being apparent, semi-moietiy based roles such as junggayi retain contemporary significance (see for example the verb maj ‘curse’ described in §4.6.2 which identifies a common everyday role of junggayi). In line with this, Kriol speakers have made an innovation in kin terminology that may at least partially compensate for the lack of skewed kinterms; Section 5.5.4 describes the recent introduction of the kinterms gabarani and gudi which are used self-reciprocally and also indirectly highlight semi-moietiy based relationships. As discussed below, the introduction of these kinterms has created a system of kinterms in Kriol that better allows speakers to track semi-moietiy based relationships such as mingirringgi and junggayi. So, while the hypothesis given in Table 5–4 suggests that a lack of skewed kinterms parallels the pattern of cultural change whereby roles such as junggayi are of diminishing importance, it can conversely be argued that as the shift to Kriol nears completion for Marra people, younger speakers are making innovations in the system of kinterms that continue to maintain the salience of ceremonial roles such as junggayi.

5.4.3 **DYADS AND THEIR FUNCTION AS SIMPLE KINTERMS IN MARRA**

In addition to the simple kinterms with their paradigms of possessed and vocative forms, Marra also has a set of dyadic kinterms described in some detail in Merlan and Heath (1982) and in Heath (1981). Dyadic kinterms are those which designate a pair “in which the kinship relationship is between the two referents internal to the kin expression” (Merlan and Heath 1982: 107). Cross-linguistically, dyadic kinterms, or dyads, are often
derived using morphology related to other grammatical functions and processes such as reciprocals, compounding, family group classifiers or associative duals or plurals (Evans 2006a). Taking Bininj Gunwok as an example, which has extraordinarily complex and well-documented systems of kin terminology and person reference strategies, dyads exist but are formed quite regularly with the dyadic kin suffixes -ko and -miken (Evans 2003: 163–166; Garde 2013: 59).

Dyadic kinterms are common in the languages of the Gulf and Roper River regions, including Marra. In Marra however, dyadic kinterms are somewhat of a special case in that in some instances, they are used as simple kinterms, where they ‘intrude’ into the system of basic kin terms. Indeed, for some kin categories, “the dyadic forms are the only ones which exist” (Merlan and Heath 1982: 116). Interestingly, the dyads which intrude into the sets of linear or simple kin terms appear to be “sensitive to social factors”, restricted to spouse and affinal relationships (ibid: 118). These intruding dyads host prefixes in order to be assigned to the possessed and vocative categories to form the paradigms that occur with other simple kinterms. Table 5–5 illustrates the contrast between a non-intrusive dyadic kinterm, *garlijgarra*, which is complemented by a standard set of simple kinterms compared to an intrusive dyad, *maygurla*, which also occurs in the related set of simple kinterms, carrying person-marking prefixes:74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyadic form</th>
<th>Example of non-intrusive dyad</th>
<th>Example of intrusive dyad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocative form</td>
<td><em>garlijgarra</em> ‘mother-child pair’</td>
<td><em>maygurla</em> ‘husband-wife pair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person possessed referential</td>
<td><em>ga</em>-<em>gajirri</em> ‘mother[1]’</td>
<td><em>na-</em>-<em>gajirri</em> ‘mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person possessed referential</td>
<td><em>n-</em>-<em>bibi</em> ‘mother[2]’</td>
<td><em>n-</em>-<em>dalnganmarr</em> ‘son[2]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person possessed referential</td>
<td><em>n-</em>-<em>garnnya</em> ‘mother[3]’</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–5: Example of dyadic kinterms in Marra and their relationship to linear kinterms

74 Except in the 3rd person possessed slot where the form *mimay* is used.

75 The form *na-yalngardi* is not given in Heath (1981) but was attested several times in recent documentation, as in examples given in (5.10) and Appendix 7.
As shown earlier in Table 5–2, there are five kin categories (not including gender distinctions) in which dyadic terms intrude into the system of basic kinterms, similar to the example of *maygurla* given above. Cross-linguistically, it seems to be quite unusual for singular forms and vocative forms to be derived from dyads, as occurs in Marra.

In line with the prevalence of dyadic kinterms in traditional Australian languages, including Marra, dyads also feature prominently in Kriol. However, dyadic kinterms in Kriol are not distinct lexemes like those in Marra described by Heath (1981) and therefore cannot intrude into the canon of simple kinterms. Kriol speakers form dyadic kin expressions simply by adding the reciprocal *gija* to the basic kinterm. This was described in early Kriol descriptions, for example:

\[(5.13) \quad \text{Dubala} \quad \text{baba} \quad \text{gija} \quad \text{RECP} \]

They are sisters to each other.

[Sandefur 1979:94]

In an apparently recent innovation, young Kriol speakers often use the form *gijal* instead of the widely documented *gija* (shown in (5.13) above). The form *gijal* - with its ‘new’ lateral coda – appears to have developed to become analogous with the reflexive particle *misal* (or *mijal*). Example 5.14 includes both the forms *gijal* and *mijal*, demonstrating the effect of the analogous -*l*.

\[(5.14) \quad \text{im} \quad \text{meinli} \quad \text{ba} \quad \text{anggul gijal} \quad \text{ba} \quad \text{gulum mijal} \quad \text{“gabarani,” ee} \quad \text{TAG} \]

It’s mostly for uncle/nephew pairs to call each other “gabarani”, isn’t it.

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd01a_00:11:10]

In natural Kriol conversation, it is clear that dyadic expressions using *gija* or *gijal* are frequent and widely used and are an obvious continuation of patterns evidenced in many traditional Australian languages. Unlike the case of Marra, Kriol speakers create dyads using a particle that has other functions in the language as a reciprocal particle. Indeed, Sandefur’s early description did not differentiate the dyadic functions of *gijal* from other prototypical examples of reciprocal constructions (Sandefur 1979: 94). This differs from the Marra system where dyadic forms are not only distinct lexemes, but in some cases also function as simple kinterms. The Kriol system of dyads in this regard is a more economical one.

Recent Marra documentation, however, has revealed that among the few remaining Marra speakers, knowledge of these distinctive dyadic kinterms had deteriorated or been
forgotten. This is an example of some of the more intricate and fine-grained aspects of the language being lost prior to the completion of language shift. During fieldwork, Marra-speaking collaborators and I attempted to elicit dyadic kinterms from the most fluent and authoritative Marra speakers, only to end up in an elicitation dead-end. The elicitation attempts resulted in much laughter as the more senior Marra speakers repeatedly created dyads using the Kriol reciprocal *gija*, unaware that they were using a borrowing that ultimately comes from the English 'together'. The following extended passages demonstrate escalating frustration and simultaneous amusement that accompanied the inability to recall a Marra dyad – in particular, the dyad *murimuriya*, referring to a paternal grandfather/grandson pair – from contemporary collective knowledge. The dialogue shows that neither the most senior and expert speaker present (TN) nor any others present were able to recall a Marra dyad, despite several members of the group employing different elicitation strategies:

(5.15) CD

| “bubala det dubala ngamuri gija”, yu lagijat (0.5) |
| poor_thing the 3DL FaFa/SoSo RECP 2SG thus |

BR

warraya...

that[DL]...

those...

FR

[wurr-murirdi... (0.7)]

DL-FaFa

a couple of ‘murirdi’...

TN

[ee ngamuri gija. Yuu (speaks in Wubuy)=

mm FaFa RECP yes ?? ??

mm, a grandson/grandfather pair. Yes, XX

CD

=nomo-nomo “ngamuri gija”, yu tok burru

NEG NEG Fa Fa RECP 2SG speak ABL

[Marra, Marra-yani. Marra Marra-ABL

not not, “ngamuri gija”, speak in Marra, in Marra.

HN

[Marra, Marra. Marra-yani. Marra Marra Marra-ABL

Marra, Marra, in Marra

(0.5)

TN

dani muga “warra warraya ngamuri gija”

DEM indeed the[DL] that[DL] FaFa RECP

That’s it indeed. Those two are “ngamuri gija”.

(1.0)

FR

(quiet laugh)

BR

[(laugh) XX nomo “amuri gija”! XX NEG Fa Fa RECP

not “amuri gija”!

CD

[(laugh)
... 

CD  
\textit{dubala gumul mijel ngamuri=} =\textit{det dubala=} 
3DL refer to RECP FaFa the 3DL 
(Say:) They call each other ‘ngamuri’... those two.

BR  
\textit{=ngamuri=} =\textit{yuwai} 
FaFa yes 
"ngamuri”... yes.

FR  
\textit{wurr-murirdi, [wur-... warr- warr- warraya...} 
DL-FaFa DL the[DL] the[DL] that[DL] 
(two) "amuri", th- the- they...

HN  
\textit{[wurr-ngamuri gija}. 
DL-FaFa RECP 
grandson/grandfather pair.

CD  
\textit{laik dubala na, dis dubala...} 
like 3DL now this 3DL 
Like, those two people, these two...

HN  
\textbf{NGAMURI} \textbf{GIJA} \textbf{WARRAYA!} 
FaFa RECP that[DL] 
They are “ngamuri gija”!

BN  
\textit{Ngamuri gija} warraya! 
FaFa RECP that[DL] 
They are “ngamuri gija”!

CD  
\textit{Nomo "aija". Det nomo yunmi langgus det “aija".} 
NEG “gija” that NEG 1DLINCL language that “gija 
Not “gija”. That's not our language, the (word) “gija”.

BR  
\textit{Yuwai}. (laugh) 
yes 
Yeah.

Shortly afterwards, Freda Roberts leads the elicitation, using Marra first, then English and was equally unsuccessful in eliciting a Marra dyad:

FR  
\textit{warra} \textit{warraya gan.gu warriganjarlana?} 
the[DL] that[DL] how 3DL:{-ganji};PRS:RECP 
How do those two refer to each other?

BN  
\textit{murimuri gija} 
FaFa RECP 
Grandfather pair.

FR  
\textit{gagu} (to TN): \textit{gan.gu warriganjarlana} \textit{warra wirrnya}? 
MoMo how 3DL:{-ganji};PRS:RECP the[DL] this[DL] 
Grandmother, how do these two refer to each other?

TN  
\textit{ngamuri gija} \textit{warra wirrnya} 
FaFa RECP the[DL] this[DL] 
These two are "ngamuri gija"

... 

FR  
\textit{this} \textit{dubala iya, wh- [what do they call themselves} 
this 3DL here what do they call themselves these two here. wh- what do they call themselves?
Example 5.15 suggests that the Kriol reciprocal particle *gija* – used to form dyadic kin expressions in Kriol – has contributed to even the strongest Marra speakers losing working knowledge of the distinctive Marra dyads that Heath (and also Hale) had documented. Even when it was pointed out that *gija* is not a Marra word, the group collectively failed to recall any alternative dyadic expressions. Two points of note can be drawn from this: (a) it provides an example of an aspect of culturally-salient lexical knowledge being lost prior to complete language shift and (b) the utility of the Kriol dyadic structure (using *gija*) suggests that the expressive functions that dyads serve are retained for Kriol and Marra speakers alike even when they do not have access to the more elegant system of dyads previously attested in Marra.

5.5 SELF-RECIROCALS AND KRIOL SPEAKERS’ REINTERPRETATION OF A KINSHIP SYSTEM

In this section I revisit the occurrence of self-reciprocal kinemers in Marra and Kriol. This is an area in which there is a significant contrast between the two languages, with Marra having few self-reciprocal kinemers and Kriol speakers making heavy, and apparently increasing, use of them. Kriol speakers appear to have innovated a new system whereby they (or at least all male speakers) can refer to all classificatory kin of a similar age by a self-reciprocal kinterm – a feature of person reference not available to Marra speakers or speakers of Kriol’s lexifier or, until recently, Kriol speakers themselves.
5.5.1 Self-reciprocal kinterms in Marra

Marra kinterms are rarely self-reciprocal. The only instances of basic kinterms used self-reciprocally are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinterm</th>
<th>Referent group 1</th>
<th>Referent group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>murirdi</td>
<td>FaFa, FaFaBr</td>
<td>♂SoSo, BrSoSo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-murirdi</td>
<td>FaFaSi</td>
<td>♂SoDa, BrSoDa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munyumunyu</td>
<td>FaSiCh</td>
<td>FaSiCh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birnirdi</td>
<td>Fa.eBr</td>
<td>♂yBrCh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-ngajamu</td>
<td>Mo.eSi</td>
<td>♀ySiDa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–6: Basic kinterms in Marra that are used self-reciprocally

In addition to the basic kinterms listed in Table 5–6, dyad terms may be given ‘subset’ readings, of the type ‘one of a pair who call each other husband and wife’. The subsequent indeterminacy of which member of the pair is referred to makes these inherently self-reciprocal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyad</th>
<th>Simple Kinterm(s)</th>
<th>Referent 1</th>
<th>Referent 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maygurla</td>
<td>na-maygurla (VOC)</td>
<td>Wi, ♂eBrWi</td>
<td>Hu, ♀SiHu, ♀Hu.yBr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nirri-maygurla (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nurru-maygurla (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n)-mimay (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–7: Example of a dyadic kinterm used self-reciprocally as a basic kinterm

Note that the paradigm of kinterms used for the husband-wife dyad and related single-referent kin categories includes a unique basic kinterm, (n-)mimay, in the 3rd person possessed slot. This could be considered as an additional self-reciprocal basic kinterm (albeit restricted to 3rd person possessed denotations).

Considering only those self-reciprocal kinterms listed in Table 5–6, it is possible to advance a similar hypothesis as was given in the discussion on skewing (see §5.4.2) where it was suggested that skewing allows important semi-moïety-based relationships and roles to be brought to the fore through the use of kinterms. Three of the five kinterms used self-reciprocally – (n-)murirdi and birnirdi – have referents who belong to the same semi-moïety as EGO, thus are in the named role of mingirringgi (often crudely glossed as ‘owner’, e.g. of estate, Dreaming, ceremony). Avery (2002) discusses Marra and neighbouring languages that have semi-moieties as core components of their social ontologies and contrasts them with “hinterland” Roper languages that utilise moiety divisions more so than semi-moieties. Avery argues that this is reflected in kin terminology whereby the semi-moïety-focused language groups have four grandparental...
kinterms, whereas nearby moiety-focused groups may have three, conflating FaMo with MoFa, as in Ngalakgan with the kinterm *memem*. It may be that the limited function of self-reciprocals in Marra is linked to Marra social ontology that places great weight on semi-moieties. We will see with the description of Kriol self-reciprocal kinterms below, that the innovations made by Kriol speakers may also be linked to increasing the salience of semi-moiety membership.

5.5.2 Self-reciprocal kinterms in Kriol

While there is no evidence that Kriol speakers and speakers of Marra and other traditional languages differ in terms of the use of kinterms in achieving person reference, there is clear evidence that the use of self-reciprocal kinterms is more common among Kriol speakers than Marra speakers. Kriol speakers make frequent use of self-reciprocal kinterms whereas Marra speakers were shown above to have little access to them and so their use is presumably infrequent. The prevalence of self-reciprocals in Kriol and Marra and what this may tell us about cultural change and continuity is discussed further in the conclusion of this chapter. First, I will show how Kriol speakers have developed a system whereby they (or, at least, male speakers) can address all classificatory kin by a self-reciprocal kinterm.

Basic Kriol kinterms were surveyed in §5.3.1 and several self-reciprocal kinterms were introduced. It was shown that all kin in the grandparent and grandchild generations are addressed and referred to with self-reciprocal kinterms (whereas in Marra, only one of those four reciprocal categories is encoded with a self-reciprocal kinterm). Similarly, for consanguineal kin in the same generation (i.e. siblings and cross-cousins), Kriol speakers also can exclusively use self-reciprocal kinterms whereas Marra kinterms distinguish between older and younger siblings. For affinal kin, it was discussed above that in Kriol, those categories are also lexicalised with self-reciprocal kinterms: *banji* or *met* (sibling-in-law), *lambarra* (father-in-law+reciprocated categories), *gajin* (mother-in-law+reciprocated categories) and *muluri* (mother-in-law’s brother+reciprocated categories). Note, though, that the use of these self-reciprocals may more frequently apply to classificatory kin. For example, a person’s actual partner or spouse is usually referred to by the non-self-reciprocal kinterms *hasben* ‘husband’ or *waif* ‘wife’.

The remaining kinship categories then are consanguineal kin in the children’s and parent’s generation. Section 5.3.1 showed how these categories are lexicalised with English-derived kinterms (albeit with different semantics): in the parent’s generation, the categories are encoded with the terms *anti* ‘aunt’, *anggurl* ‘uncle’, *mami* ‘mother’ and
dedi ‘father’. In the child’s generation, the terms san ‘son, dota ‘daughter’, nefyu ‘nephew’ and nis ‘niece’ are used. None of these terms are self-reciprocal. Fieldwork carried out for this study, however, revealed the frequent use of two previously undocumented (in Kriol at least) self-reciprocal kinterms that do in fact apply to these categories. Gudi is a self-reciprocal kinterm used between father-son pairs and aunt-nephew pairs, while gabarani is used between uncle-nephew pairs and mother-son pairs.

With the inclusion of gudi and gabarani – and also muluri ‘mother-in-law’s brother’ which was not previously accurately described as a Kriol kinterm – it is possible to reveal a new phase in Kriol’s development: a complete system of self-reciprocal kinterms encompassing all classificatory kin of male speakers, as visually demonstrated in Figure 5–13:

![Figure 5–13: A complete system of self-reciprocal kinterms used by male Kriol speakers](image)

The radial diagram in Figure 5–13 applies only to male Kriol speakers as it was not possible for me to conclusively determine the system for female speakers. It has also been noted that the system represented in Figure 5–13 applies primarily to classificatory

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76 For example, I received variable information regarding whether the use of gudi and gabarani was as common among women as it was among men. Not being able to carry out ethnography of communication style fieldwork with women (due to gender-based socialising habits) precluded me from being able to accurately assess the situation for myself. Regardless, it is my observation that gabarani and gudi is more frequently used by and used in reference to men, hence I have glossed gabarani seemingly counter-intuitively as ‘MoBr, Mo’ with the more common male referent prioritised over the less frequent but usually prototypical gloss for the category: ‘Mo’.
kin, rather than close consanguineal kin. This explains the use of a radial diagram connoting an egalitarian structure rather than a genogram implying age gradience and gerontocracy. The system is essentially a reflection of how male Kriol speakers refer to their peers. As described below, some speakers avoid some self-reciprocals with certain close family members where age and respect factors are of greater relevance.

It has already been mentioned that three of the kinterms listed in Figure 5–13 – *muluri, gudi* and *gabarani* – were not sufficiently described previously: the three terms were not included in the list of kinterms provided by Nicholls (2009) and *gudi* and *gabarani* are not listed in the *Kriol Dikshenri* (Lee 2004). An entry for *murlurri* [sic] is found in the *Kriol Dikshenri*, but as well as being misleadingly spelt, it is allocated the incorrect and imprecise definition, “cousin” (Lee 2004). *Muluri*, as noted in §5.2.1, is also a Marra kinterm – one of the few Marra kinterms that undergoes patrilineal skewing. *Gudi* and *gabarani*, however, appear to be relatively recent additions into Kriol as they are not attested in existing Kriol documentation. They are not derived from Marra and the story of the adoption of these terms warrants a more detailed discussion, as follows.

### 5.5.3 GUDI AND GABARANI

These two kinterms appear to be relatively recent additions to the set of Kriol kinterms, having not been documented previously. Their use is extremely prevalent among young male speakers and also common among many middle-aged speakers and female speakers. I was first explicitly taught the kinterm *gabarani* in 2004 by a teenage Kriol speaker in Minyerri; when he had triangulated relationships and concluded that he was my *anggurl* ‘uncle’, he then introduced the option of us calling each other *gabarani*, which he has done ever since. In Ngukurr in the 2010s both *gudi* and *gabarani* are ubiquitous in daily interactions, both interpersonal and in new formats such as social media.77 The pragmatics of using *gudi* and *gabarani* appear to be that they are primarily used for classificatory kin of around the same age. The prototypical use of these kinterms is as a vocative, used self-reciprocally by male speakers with other males. While women also use the terms *gudi* and *gabarani*, some Kriol speakers suggest they are more likely to be used by male speakers than female speakers. My own observations also suggest this but it has not yet been sufficiently explored.

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77 In casual speech, *gabarani* is often abbreviated to *gaps* by young Kriol speakers, typically rendered as “gups” on social media.
As described above, the apparent recent adoption of \textit{gudi} and \textit{gabarani} represents a neat innovation giving Kriol speakers access to a self-reciprocal kinterm for all classificatory kin categories. Prior to their borrowing, male Kriol speakers only had \textit{anggurl} (MoBr) and \textit{nefyu/boi} (SiSo) to use instead of \textit{gabarani} and \textit{dedi} (Fa)/\textit{san} (So) rather than \textit{gudi}. These were the only kin categories lacking self-reciprocal kinterms. As already noted, \textit{gudi} and \textit{gabarani} appear to be used more often with classificatory kin, while \textit{dedi} and \textit{anggurl} seem to remain the preferred term used for close and/or consanguineal kin. The explanation given in (5.16) supports this:

(5.16) GeD: \textit{them lilwan- lilwan rait, them lil-... lil anggurl-mob}  
\textit{those small small okay those small small MB-COLL}  
\textit{them \uparrow lilililwan ai gulu alabat “gabarani”. lagijat.}  
\textit{those small[REDUP] 1SG call:TR 3PL [kinterm] thus}  
Those small ones are okay. The young uncles. Those young ones? I call them “gabarani”. Like that.

GrD: \textit{bat if im brabli anggul...?}  
\textit{but if 3SG actual MB}  
But if it’s an actual uncle?

GeD: \textit{ai gu- gulu im “anggurl”.}  
\textit{1SG call:TR 3SG [kinterm]}  
I call him “anggurl”.

The young man being interviewed is about ten years younger than me and we call each other \textit{gudi}. He explains the pragmatics of these ‘new’ kinterms further, using our classificatory relationship as the reference point:

(5.17) Laik \textit{wen yu garra bi olmenolmenwan na,}  
\textit{like when 2SG FUT be elderly_male then}  
\textit{ai garra gulu yu- stat gulumbat yu “dedi” na, si?}  
\textit{1SG FUT call:TR 2SG start call:TR:PROG 2SG [kinterm] then see}  
\textit{Kaans gulumbat yu “gudi” na. Garri grei hey,}  
\textit{NEG call:TR:PROG 2SG [kinterm] then. with grey hair,}  
\textit{ngi... gudi!}  
\textit{TAG [kinterm]}  
Like, when you’ll be an old man, then I’ll call you- start calling you “dedi” then, see? (I) can’t call you “gudi” then. With grey hair, right? Gudi!

Note in (5.17) the speaker concludes his explanation of the pragmatics of \textit{gudi} with a naturally-occurring use of \textit{gudi} as a vocative, referring directly to me as he makes his joke about becoming grey-haired.
Kintypes that are applied only to classificatory kin are not unknown in non-urban Aboriginal communities. From fieldwork with Gurindji people in the 1970s, McConvell describes a small set of kintypes used only for classificatory kin, “applied to potential affines who come from another location to perform dances at a circumcision (marntiwa) ritual” (McConvell 1982: 86). Three kintypes are attested for these “distant potential affines”. They are given below with their unmarked equivalents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kintype/relationship</th>
<th>Unmarked kinterm</th>
<th>Classificatory (“distant potential”) kinterm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MoMo, MoMoBr</td>
<td>jaju</td>
<td>wurrurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Br, Si</td>
<td>papa, ngapa, kapuku, karlaj</td>
<td>warluku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WiMo, WiMoBr</td>
<td>mali</td>
<td>puruna mali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–8: Gurindji kintypes used for classificatory kin only (from McConvell 1982)

Further evidence of the practice of applying kintypes to classificatory kin is found in another large northern Australian community Wadeye, where the traditional language Murrinh Patha retains vitality. There, young male speakers appear to have borrowed two terms from nearby languages and applied them to “somewhat distant kin relations” (e.g. classificatory kin) (Mansfield 2014: 40). Ngarluk, borrowed from Jaminjung, covers categories encoded by four distinct Murrinh Patha kintypes, while warri, borrowed from Gurindji, is used to refer to classificatory fathers.

Each of the communities mentioned above are comparatively large (between 700-2500 residents) and have a single dominant language or lingua franca. An hypothesis is that sociolinguistically homogenous communities the size of Daguragu/Kalkarindji, Wadeye and Ngukurr provide a suitable environment for classificatory-only kinship terms to appear. In such environments, sizeable peer groups form where classificatory kin may begin to be more numerous than affinal kin, in contrast to pre-contact periods and smaller communities where the proportion of close affinal kin is greater. In larger communities it conceivably becomes possible to formally delineate classificatory kin from affinal kin. It is apparent that some traditional law-derived kin behaviours (e.g. avoidance) are less strict for classificatory kin and so speakers may find ways to linguistically and lexically encode this. In other words, (in the Gurindji example),

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78 In urban settings, Aboriginal English speakers regularly use kintypes like bruss ‘brother’, sis ‘sister’ and uncle to refer to other Aboriginal people they are not related to and may not know well. Such urban systems of classifying non-relatives as kin are less formally regulated than in remote settings but the similarity is evident.
speakers may want to avoid referring to distantly-related kin as *mali* ‘mother-in-law+brothers’ when it connotes specific avoidance behaviours that may be relaxed for classificatory kin from afar. If that is the case, then the ‘distant kinterm’, *puruna mali*, could serve a useful function.

With the borrowing and subsequent adaptation of the kinterms *gudi* and *gabarani*, Roper Kriol speakers are likewise contributing to a possible phenomenon of large communities adopting and applying kinterms to classificatory kin. Actual (i.e. consanguineal) fathers and uncles play important disciplinary and guardianship roles within Kriol-speaking families. In particular, uncles – who are always *junggayi* – play important roles that come to the fore during ceremony and other important local sociopolitical matters. Using *gudi* and *gabarani* with peers may be a strategy to background the clearly defined kinship-based norms of actual father/son and uncle/nephew relationships, while still allowing for the maintenance of subsection-based kin categories.

### 5.5.4 Origin of Gudi and Gabarani

*Gudi* and *gabarani* are curious kinterms among the set of Kriol kinterms in current use in Ngukurr. First, they appear to have been adopted into Kriol only recently – late additions to an already-established system of kinterms. Secondly, the adoption of *gudi* and *gabarani* creates a complete paradigm (see Figure 5–13) so that now all classificatory kin can be referred to by a self-reciprocal kinterm. Thirdly, and perhaps most unexpectedly for recently adopted lexical material, they are derived not from English but from Aboriginal language(s). The majority of kinterms in current use in Ngukurr are English-based (etymologies of the full set of kinterms is discussed in §5.5.5 below), but a significant proportion – around one-third – are derived from Aboriginal languages. We can assume that non-English-derived kinterms typically occur in Kriol because of the influence of local languages during creolisation, when traditional languages were still widely used. Given the evidence that *gudi* and *gabarani* are recently adopted lexemes, their adoption into the Kriol lexicon cannot be attributed to transfer during creolisation, making them interesting and anomalous cases. The final reason why these kinterms are of particular interest is that despite being derived from Aboriginal languages they do not occur in the languages found in the immediate Roper River Region, but have come from further afar. So where did the lexemes *gudi* and *gabarani* come from?

The answer to this question came easily to Murray Garde who has spent years living and working with speakers of Bininj Gunwok (see, for example, Garde 2013). He instantly recognised the forms and understood that they relate to domain of kinship, but he did
not know the terms as simple kinterms, used in the way that Kriol speakers use them. Speakers of Bininj Gunwok and some other Gunwinyguan languages use the forms *gudi* and *gabarani* (as well as others) as "sympathy response cries" (Evans 1992a; Garde 1996). Like kinterms, they are used in reference to certain kin categories. But unlike kinterms, in Bininj Gunwok dialects and related languages, they are an interjection that acknowledges or apologises for offence that may have been caused by an utterance that is impolite to certain relatives in relation to appropriate kinship behaviours. Garde gives an example using the Gunwinyguan language Dalabon and Kriol:

(5.18)  Roba  Riba  said  kûrdûkûrd,  thei  filim  yu,  **kurdih**.
Roper  River  LOC  women  3PL  feel:TR  2SG  "sorry for ribaldry"

In the Roper River region, women (i.e. your opposite sex joking relationship relatives), they’ll grab you (e.g. genitals), 'excuse me'.

Example 5.18 uses the form *kurdih* (the same form as the Kriol *gudi*, but rendered in Dalabon orthography). In the Kune dialect of Bininj Gunwok, *kurdih* "is used after one’s father, child or son-in-law has been insulted" (Evans 1992a: 238). The function of "sympathy response cries" among speakers of Bininj Gunwok was described further by Evans as:

... words that are appropriate as a response of sympathy or apology after someone has been sworn at ... a ritualised activity with clear norms about who can swear at what kin. (Evans 1992a: 237–238)

He provides a Gundjeihmi example using the sympathy response cry *balmarded*:

(5.19)  A:  **Yi-balk-beng!**  **Yi-nguk-gord-beng!**  **Yi-bid-dedj-dorreng!**
2-orifice-mind  2-guts-shit-mind  2-hand-crotch-with
‘You orifice-maniac! You shit-brain! You wanker!’

B:  **Balmarded!**
Sorry for my sibling
‘Don’t get upset, brother!’

---

79 The actual referent here was women in the MoMo or SiDaDa relationship to a male ego. People in these relationships are culturally permitted or obligated to have an uninhibited joking relationship with their counterparts (hence being 'permitted' to "grab" at the men).
Evans (1992a) explains the kin-based restrictions that relate to the use of sympathy response cries among Gundjeiimi speakers:

- **Balmarded**: used when a sibling is insulted
- **Go**: used when a speaker’s wife, sister-in-law, father, mother, uncle (MoBr), cross-cousin or paternal grandmother is insulted
- **Gabarani**: used when a child, nephew, niece, son-in-law, mother-in-law or parallel grandparent is insulted

In the easternmost dialect of Bininj Gunwok, Kune, the term *kurdih* occurs as one of two sympathy response cries:

- **Balmarded**: used when a brother, uncle (MoBr), nephew or niece is insulted
- **Kurdih**: used when a father, child or son-in-law is insulted (Evans 1992a)

The now-common use of *gabarani* and *gudi* as simple kinterms in Roper Kriol is likely to be a result of borrowing from languages like Bininj Gunwok where they are used as kin-restricted sympathy response cries. Bininj Gunwok seems the most likely source as it is a relatively widely spoken and stable language with many speakers who would interact with Kriol speakers or in many cases have some fluency in both Kriol and Bininj Gunwok. The exact way in which the terms *gabarani* and *gudi* would have been borrowed into Kriol is not clear, but it is assumedly a product of young Roper Kriol speakers having extended contact with Bininj Gunwok speakers. The most obvious potential location where that could happen is boarding secondary schools in Darwin where most teenagers from Ngukurr spend periods of time during their adolescence, at a time when peer-driven language innovations or trends are common. Another example of teenage-driven innovation in kin terminology in a contact situation that resulted in borrowing not from the dominant language (English) but from another Aboriginal language was discussed by Langlois (2004). She noted that teenage Pitjanjatjara speakers in Areyonga had not only introduced English-derived kinterms into their lexicon but also two terms that were borrowings from Arrernte – *kaaka* ‘older brother’ and *yayi* ‘older sister’. As mentioned above, young Murrinh Patha speakers in Wadeye have also borrowed kinterms from the nearby languages Gurindji and Jaminjung (Mansfield 2014: 39).

As already established, Kriol speakers use *gudi* and *gabarani* as simple kinterms and use them self-reciprocally, therefore applying a new function to the lexemes that is not attested in source languages. However, at least some Roper Kriol speakers who use the terms as simple kinterms are aware of the original pragmatics of the lexemes:
Example 5.20 is provided by two brothers (their fathers are brothers), both of whom use *gudi* as a simple kinterm when talking to me rather than the kinterms for father (*dedi*) and son (*san*). Yet they are both familiar with the function of *gudi* as a sympathy response cry.

The dual function of *gudi* and *gabarani* as both a simple kinterm and a sympathy response cry is attested in another example: *ngarlamo* is a common vocative kinterm used between mother-in-law/son-in-law pairs. In the case of *ngarlamo*, it is used as a marked or auxiliary kinterm, supplementing the unmarked kinterm *gajin*, which is more common, especially in referential uses. *Gajin* is also self-reciprocal, so unlike *gudi* and *gabarani*, *ngarlamo* does not relate to a category that otherwise lacks a self-reciprocal kinterm. Extending the discussion excerpted in (5.20) above, the two Kriol speakers in their mid-twenties explain the use of *ngarlamo* as a sympathy response cry, instructing me on how I would use it upon hearing my muluri ‘mother-in-law’s brother’ being sworn at:

(5.21) GeD: \( \text{Laik if } \text{Bejiboif swe la im, } \text{yu-raa la} \)

like if [nickname] swear ALL 2SG 2SG-FUT thus

[“Gudil! Gudil!” yu-raa la.]

Sorry.for.swearing sorry.for.swearing 2SG-FUT thus

Like, if you swear at him, you’ve gotta say “Gudi! Gudi!”, you’ve gotta say.

PD: [“Gudi! Gudi!”]

Like, if you swear at him, you’ve gotta say “Gudi! Gudi!”, you’ve gotta say.

GrD: ‘Ngarlamo!’ yu-raa la.

You've gotta say "Ngarlamo!"
You've gotta say "Ngarlamo!". Like, how your mother-in-law's brother just called out to you?... Like, if (Patrick) was to swear at his joking relationship counterpart...

Like if I swear at that prick there, at, at your mother-in-law's brother... you've gotta say "Ngarlamo!".

You've gotta say "Ngarlamo!".

You've gotta say "Ngarlamo!"

Like you're having - it means you have "shame" for him, like (showing) respect towards him, that's "ngarlamo".

You've gotta say "Ngarlamo!". Dad!

Note that in the final utterance of this passage, the speaker reverts to a standard vocative use of gudi in reference to me, who was struggling to adequately comprehend their lesson. Examples 5.20 and 5.21 show that young Kriol speakers who use terms like gudi, gabarani and ngarlamo as simple kinterms and/or as vocative kinterms are also aware of their application as sympathy response cries that are governed by kinship-based politeness and norms of communication. This suggests that the Kriol speakers' adoption of such terms as simple kinterms is a somewhat self-aware innovation, and has been adapted to fit neatly within the existing kinship system (see Figure 5–13) that has many

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80 The use of frik 'prick' here is used in jest, signifying that the speaker and the third party under discussion are allowed or obligated to refer to each other in such a vulgar way.

81 The use of the term 'shame' here is a reference to a distinctive notion of 'shame' in Aboriginal cultures, discussed further by Harkins (1990).
shared features with pre-contact kinship systems such as the one used by Marra speakers, described in §5.2.

5.5.5 **ETYMOLOGY OF KRIOL KINTERMS**

Following the somewhat surprising etymologies of *gudi* and *gabarani*, the discussion of etymologies of Kriol kinterms is extended here to encompass the full set in current use. While §5.3.1 presented core kin categories in Kriol and nineteen kinterms that are used to encode those categories, there are further kinterms in current use that can be considered to be marked or pragmatically restricted in some way. Appendix 11 offers a fuller list of kinterms in current use by young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, adding a further thirteen kinterms to those discussed in §5.3.1: a total of thirty-two.

Of the thirty-two kinterms given in the complete list, twenty-two are derived from English and ten are derived from Australian languages. Regarding the English-derived kinterms in Kriol, it has already been demonstrated that following relexification the referents of the kinterms often have more in common semantically with categories found in traditional languages like Marra than in English. For example, *gajin* is obviously lexified from *cousin*, but assigned to the specific self-reciprocal kin category of mother-in-law/child-in-law. Interestingly, another form derived from *cousin* also occurs in contemporary Kriol, but assigned to a different kin category: *kas* is now a common kinterm applied specifically to the cross-cousin category. It has presumably been borrowed subsequent to the lexicalisation of *gajin*. *Kas* is synonymous with the older term, *barn.ga*, which is still in current use.

Other English-derived Kriol kinterms have been adopted into Kriol and applied to specific kin categories but where the original English lexemes were not kinterms. There are eight such kinterms, most of which are pragmatically restricted. An example is *rabish* (from ‘rubbish’) which men sometimes use to refer to their sisters. The etymon ‘rubbish’ connotes the restrictions associated with the kin category under traditional law such as avoiding the use of their name, not sharing personal space and being unable to touch or use their possessions. Another example is the recently flourishing use of *genga* (presumably from ‘gang-er’) that young men commonly use to refer to classificatory brother-in-laws:

(5.22)  
\[ Aa\ \textit{tu}\ \textit{fani}\ \textit{dis}\ \textit{genga}. \]
\[ \text{Ah very funny this brother-in-law} \]
\[ \text{Ah, this brother-in-law (of mine) is hilarious.} \]
The "gena" 'brother-in-law' who the speaker referred to above further discussed the plasticity of the canon of kin terms used by young speakers. Example 5.23 includes the synonymous kin terms gena, fren and banji.

(5.23) GrD:  
Wani "gena"?
what "ganger"
What's "gena"?

KM:  
Im fren.
3SG brother-in-law
It's a brother-in-law

GrD:  
Ai neba irri det wed.
1SG never hear the word
I'd never heard that word.

KM:  
Mela bin migima enijing, yuno. Enijing
1PLEXCL PST make:TR:up anything TAG anything
na mela gin migimap. Speshli ol
EMPH 1PLEXCL can make:TR:up especially all
dem yangbois yuno.
the[PL] young boys you know
We were creating anything, you know. We can create anything at all. Especially the teenage boys, you know.

GrD:  
Bat im ba banjimob?
but 3SG for sibling-in-law:PL
But it's in reference to your brother-in-laws?

KM:  
Mm, gena, banji mela gulu... jas migima.
mm "gena" sibling-in-law 1PLEXCL call:TR just make:TR:up
Mmm, we call banji (brother-in-law) "gena"... (we) just create it.

It is unclear whether fashionable recent adoptions like gena will become a permanent fixture in the Roper Kriol lexicon, but at the time of undertaking fieldwork, it was certainly a high frequency kin term among at least some young speakers. The six other English-derived Kriol terms applied to kin categories that are not kin terms in English are: blouk 'brother' (from 'bloke'), mit 'sibling-in-law' (from 'mate'), fren 'sibling-in-law' (from 'friend'), banji 'sibling-in-law' (from 'fancy(man)'), boi 'son/nephew' (from 'boy') and gel 'daughter/niece' (from 'girl'). The remaining fourteen English-derived kin terms in Kriol are also kin terms in English (albeit with different semantic ranges – see Appendix 11 for fuller information on semantics of these terms): braja 'brother', sista 'sister', dedi 'father', mami 'mother', anti 'aunt', anggurl 'uncle', dota 'daughter', san 'son', waif 'wife', hasben 'husband', kas 'cross-cousin', gajin 'mother-in-law', nefyu 'nephew' and nis 'niece'.
In addition to the twenty-two English-based kinterms in current use in Ngukurr, ten kinterms are derived from Aboriginal languages. The cases of *gudi* and *gabarani* have already been discussed in detail. The remaining eight non-English-derived kinterms with rudimentary glosses are:

- *barn.ga* ‘cross-cousin’
- *baba* ‘sibling’
- *lambarra* ‘father-in-law’
- *muluri* ‘mother-in-law’s brother’
- *abuji* ‘father’s mother’
- *amuri* ‘father’s father’
- *gagu* ‘mother’s mother’
- *abija* ‘mother’s father’

These kinterms were all introduced in §5.3.1 and are described in further detail in Appendix 11. One kinterm listed above is, like *gudi* and *gabarani*, not found in the language/s of the immediate Roper River Region: *barn.ga* is attested in languages such as Wambaya (Nordlinger 1998) and Jingulu (Pensalfini 2011), originally spoken several hundred kilometres south of the Roper River. Cognates of *barn.ga* are also found in distant languages such as Ngarninyman and Gurindji in the Victoria River District west of Katherine. There is no evidence that *barn.ga* is a recent adoption and, given the location of the languages it is derived from, it appears as though it was introduced into Roper Kriol as a result of the pastoral industry of the late 1800s/early 1900s and probably featured in Northern Territory Pidgin English.

The remaining seven Kriol kinterms derived from Aboriginal languages are all found in one or more of the traditional languages of the Roper Region, in either exact form, or in forms that are cognate. In some instances, cognates also occur outside the region, most notably in the case of *lambarra* ‘father/child-in-law’, which occurs in numerous distant languages including Gurindji and Jingulu. In local languages, the form *lambarrgarra* occurs in Alawa, while Heath reports the exact form *lambarra* for Marra. The other six terms all appear to be clearly derived from local languages. Table 5–9 summarises the etymologies of all ten Kriol kinterms derived from Aboriginal languages.
Table 5–9: Etymologies of Kriol kinterms derived from Aboriginal languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinterm</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Languages with exact form</th>
<th>Languages with cognate form</th>
<th>Local languages with no related form</th>
<th>No info found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amuri</td>
<td>FaFa</td>
<td>Marra, Ngandi, Nung, Warn, Mang., Yanyuwa, Alawa?</td>
<td>Rith./Wäg.?</td>
<td>Ngalakgan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baba</td>
<td>Br, Si</td>
<td>Marra, Alawa, Mang., Yanyuwa, also Jingulu</td>
<td>Ngandi, Ngal., Rith./Wäg.</td>
<td>Nung, Warn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barn.ga</td>
<td>cross-cousin</td>
<td>Wambaya, Jingulu</td>
<td>Ngumbin languages</td>
<td>all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabarani</td>
<td>uncle/nephew</td>
<td>Gundjeihmi, Kunwinjku?</td>
<td>all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gudi</td>
<td>father/son</td>
<td>Dalabon, Kune</td>
<td>Alawa?</td>
<td>all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the relationship between Marra and Kriol, Table 5–9 suggests that Marra has made greater lexical contributions to the domain of kinship than other languages of the Roper River Region, reflecting the findings of Chapter 4 that pertained to non-English based verbs. Table 5–9 shows that three Kriol kinterms – lambarra, baba and muluri – occur in Marra in the exact form. Another three Kriol forms are related to Marra terms – gugu~gagu, murimuri~amuri, bijaja~abija – where both the phonological forms and

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82 Cognates of baba occur as a sibling kinterm across much of Australia, including the Roper Region, however the exact form baba is not typical, e.g. the form wawa occurs in Ngandi and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak. Lambarra is also attested in other Australian languages; however, Marra is the only language in the immediate region in which that exact form is documented.
the kinship categories they refer to are similar in both languages. Considering other languages of the Roper River Region we find that several kinterms are attested in other substrates but not at the frequency (number of shared kinterms) or with the precision (presence of exact forms) that is observed with Marra.

Marra’s influential role is further evidenced when we consider the common kinterm *muluri* ‘brother of mother-in-law’. The only Aboriginal language this form occurs in is Marra and so it appears to be a direct borrowing, similar to the eleven verbs described in §4.4. Additionally, an ‘auxiliary’ kinterm, *jiwa*, only occurs in Marra (Heath 1981: 477) and Alawa (Sharpe 2001a: 54). *Jiwa* is usually glossed as ‘widow’ by Kriol speakers, but for Kriol and Marra speakers it carries a different kinship denotation than the English term *widow*. *Jiwa* refers specifically to a widow of a recently-deceased person and a group of close sibling-in-laws (of the deceased) who are culturally obliged to go into hiding during a mourning period. The wide use of *jiwa* and *muluri* among Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, in addition to other data presented above, suggests Marra has had a greater impact upon Kriol’s lexicon than other local languages and also provides examples of continuities across the language shift boundary both lexically and, in the case of *jiwa*, in relation to cultural practices pertaining to bereavement.

5.6 KINTERMS IN DISCOURSE

Despite being able to assign basic kinterms in languages like Marra and Kriol to an easily abbreviated kin category, kinterms are more than just the kin categories they denote. Speakers make choices about which kinterms they use based on other factors. The factors may be grammatical, such as the possessed forms that Marra speakers use described in §5.4.1 or they can be determined by pragmatics and influenced by cultural connotations such as the example of Kriol speaking men referring to their sisters as *rabish* ‘rubbish’ as noted in §5.5.5. This section makes a preliminary attempt to further discuss the use of kinterms in discourse and consider ways in which kinship relates to politeness strategies in discourse. This rounds out the discussion of kinship as encoded in Marra and Kriol and attempts to address the issue that “relatively little work has gone into understanding the actual use of kinterms in interaction” (Stivers, Enfield and Levinson 2007: 6).

The choice of which kinterm to use is strategic, as there are always multiple choices available to speakers. Marra and Kriol speakers use relative frames of reference to achieve person reference, leaning heavily on the use of kinterms. As a basic feature of being a pragmatically-competent Kriol speaker, there is evidence that in discourse Kriol
speakers employ a strategy of using the listener as the propositus – that is, the reference point of the kinterm. This approach was noted by Nicholls who found that "often the kin relationship between the addressee and the referent is determined before the actual identity of the referent" (Nicholls 2009: 66). Attempting person reference via a kinterm that uses the listener as the reference point can be done even when the referent or the narrative involving the referent is more closely associated to the speaker than the listener. An example of this is given below where the speaker refers to someone known to her but uses the listener as the reference point to the kinterm even though it does not result in recognition:

(5.24) Bessi: ... Beswick-mob bin jeya,
    Beswick-PL PST there
     ... the Beswick group were there.
Flora: Aidano humob.
     I don't know who:PL
     I don't know who
Bessi: det yu braja du tolwan, garrim biginini
     the 2SG brother too tall:ADJ with children
     And your brother as well, he's tall, with children
Flora: Wanim neim?
     what name
     What's his name?

(Nicholls 2009: 220–221)

The reason why anchoring a 3rd person referent through the 2nd person is considered good pragmatics are twofold:

(1) The speaker identifies herself as someone with full working competency of relevant kinship networks. This is an important field of knowledge for all Aboriginal people in the region regardless of the language(s) involved. It connotes expert knowledge of kinship networks and implies further knowledge in areas such as ancestry, land tenure and ceremonial practices involving demarcation of subsections and semi-moieties

(2) It allows for the easy deployment of kin-based politeness strategies that can restrict a speaker from using the personal name of certain kin or of using names in the company of others who are in avoidance relationships with the referent.

It appears that using the 2nd person as the point of reference for relative terms is the unmarked form in Kriol pragmatics (see Nicholls 2009: 66). This is further evidenced by unpossessed kinterms, which regularly carry a 2nd person possessive meaning in discourse:
In this example, the speaker uses a possessed kinterm expression, *bla mami* ‘POSS+mother’ which is unspecified by number and person. Using Kriol pragmatics, this form is understood as the listener being the propositus.

In underspecifying possession in kinterms in this way, a concordance between Marra and Kriol should be noted. Marra does not require kinterms to be overtly marked with possessive pronouns as each kinterm has a set of forms for referring to 1st, 2nd and 3rd person possession. Although Kriol does make consistent use of possessive pronouns with kinterms, unmarked forms are not uncommon in discourse, with possession implied. Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that in Nunggubuyu, it is also the 2nd person forms of kinterms that are unmarked morphologically (Heath 1982a: 14). Of course, using the hearer as propositus is not an exclusive strategy; it is also very common to achieve person reference by relating kinterms through a 1st or 3rd person. It remains true to say, however, that Kriol speakers relate kinterms through the listener more frequently than a non-Indigenous English speaker would, and the hypothesis is that this allows speakers to demonstrate knowledge of kinship networks.

### 5.6.1 Conveying Kinship Politeness

The above example of using a listener as propositus for a kinterm relates to using good Kriol pragmatics but it is not an explicit example of politeness per se. This section narrows the discussion of kinterms and kinship in discourse to kinship-based politeness strategies. Kriol and Marra, as with other Aboriginal languages, show a proliferation of kinship-based politeness strategies which is conveyed linguistically and non-verbally and is complex, with various conventions diffused and differentiated across the entire spectrum of kin categories. This section only provides a short discussion on this topic, focusing – albeit inexhaustively – upon low-level avoidance kin relationships such as brother-sister pairs and brothers-in-law.

There is evidence that the pragmatics of politeness between certain kinship pairs is similar in Marra and Kriol. For example, Marra speakers and Kriol speakers both place opposite sex siblings in a fairly low-level avoidance relationship. Direct communication is generally avoided but is not entirely taboo. Communication is, however, bounded by politeness strategies. Marra and Kriol speakers employ a strategy of using 2nd person plural forms when referring to each other, invoking the requirement to avoid direct
communication. In Marra, this is shown in (5.26), where during a group discussion the speaker was encouraging her younger brother to contribute to the language documentation session:

\[(5.26) \text{ngarl-uwumay nya-Marra-yani.} \]

\[\text{speak 2PL:do;FUT;CONT N[OBL]-Marra-ABL} \]

You've got to speak in Marra.

\[\text{[20100709MARRAfrothersNUMgd01_00:49:45]}\]

In (5.26) the form ngarl-uwumay 'you (plural) speak' is used instead of the singular form ngarl-imay because the speaker is talking to her brother and is obligated to do so in an indirect manner. This is not unlike politeness strategies used in widely-known languages such as French and German, however in those languages the use of 2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural forms is not strictly determined by kinship.

In Kriol, the same practice is common, where adults employ the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural pronoun yumo(b) when talking to someone in a low-level avoidance relationship such as an opposite sex sibling. This is shown in (5.27) in a conversation between two brothers-in-law:

\[(5.27) \text{Genga, yumo na dum det ekshin.} \]

\[\text{brother-in-law 2PL EMPH do:TR the action} \]

\[\text{Brother-in-law, you demonstrate the gesture.} \]

\[\text{[KM_20130508KRIOLdrkmNGUgd01_00:05:43]}\]

Plural forms can also be used when referring to a 3\textsuperscript{rd} person who is in an avoidance relationship. In (5.28), a Kriol speaker introduces his genga 'brother-in-law' and then immediately uses the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural pronoun alabat to refer to him:

\[(5.28) \text{Main genga ya... maitbi alabat garra sho yumo...} \]

\[\text{my brother-in-law here maybe 3PL FUT show 2PL} \]

\[\text{My brother-in-law here... perhaps he will show you...} \]

\[\text{[Ngularr Language Centre 2013c_00:00:14]}\]

Kriol speakers may employ additional strategies relating to opposite-sex sibling avoidance/respect. This can include the choice of kinterm used in person reference, where a marked kinterm can connote an avoidance relationship. Men use the term rabish or rabij (from the English 'rubbish') when referring to sisters who are not present. Young women do not appear to use this strategy but identified at least three techniques used to refer to relatives they are not permitted to name:
1. Using plural forms
2. Triangulation using a 'name-able' 3rd person as a referent
3. Using initials or a nickname instead of a brother's given name.

The first strategy of using plural forms was shown in (5.27) and (5.28) above and again mentioned in (5.29) below. Triangulation through a 'name-able' person is also discussed in (5.29) below while the use of initials was demonstrated in (5.5) in general discussion of person reference in Kriol.

(5.29) Samtaim thei tok "yumo"o thei gulu alabat beibi. sometime 3PL say 2PL or 3PL refer.to 3PL baby Laik det beibi? Laik if mela sista garri beibi like the baby like if 1PLEXCL sister with baby from alabat san, thei gulu maidi "Traisin mami", la. from 3PL son 3PL refer.to maybe [name] mother thus Sometimes they say 'yumob', or they refer to their baby. As in the child? Like if our sister has a baby from their(?) son, they (brothers) will refer to (their sister) as “Trysean’s mother”, like so.

Another way in which kinship-based politeness is expressed through person-reference is the use of a vague or euphemistic generic people noun. Words approximating the functions of the English somebody/someone are used by Kriol and Marra speakers in similar ways to English but also in additional distinctively euphemistic ways as placeholders for names or other identifiers such as kinterms and often with a determiner or demonstrative. Kriol speakers use the term sambidi (from ‘somebody’) and in Marra the equivalent term is wumburlana. The choice to use sambidi or wumburlana can relate to kinship-based politeness and allow a speaker to avoid a name of taboo kin or connote that they are speaking about someone they should not name or discuss in detail.

The use of wumburlana in Marra is shown in (5.30) and (5.31). In the first example it is used more as a self-interrogative, indicating only a lack of recall of a name. In the second example it is used in a way that indicates the speaker expects context and shared knowledge to result in successful person reference. Successful person reference is confirmed by the response in the second line. In (5.31), wumburlana is deployed as a politeness strategy, used as a placeholder to avoid direct reference to someone who should not be named.

(5.30) ngulur, nanggaya gal-uyana ... wumburlana... whipsnake that[M] bite-3SG:(-jinji);FUT what's-his-name A whipsnake that is going to bite ... what's his name...
When providing Kriol translations, Marra speakers would promptly translate any instance of *wumburlana* as *sambidi*. Kriol speakers use the English-derived *sambidi* in ways that reflect English usages, as in (5.32), and in less English ways that are explicitly euphemistic and often include determiners or demonstratives as in (5.33).

(5.31) **TN:** Manyjayu *wurrui* *wumburlana.*  
[Proper name] DU:? **unnamed.person**  
The pair of Manyjayu and he-who-can't-be-named

**FR:** Yaniya *Migayi* *ganarrinya.*  
F[OBL] [Proper name] father[3]  
Migayi's father.

**TN:** Ngula *ngarl... ngarl-ngami.*  
NEG talk talk-1SG:do;FUT  
I can’t say it.

(5.32) *wen yu di la sambidi gabarra.*  
when 2SG delouse LOC someone head  
When you pick lice out of someone's head (hair).

(5.33) *yuwai bala det sambidi la jeiyil.*  
yes poor_thing the someone LOC gaol  
Yeah, poor guy, that 'someone' (who I won't directly refer to) is in gaol.

In Examples 5.26–5.33, we see continuing practices of kinship-based politeness and respect shown towards people in low-level avoidance relationships such as opposite-sex siblings and brothers-in-law. Some examples demonstrate a continuation of pragmatics found in traditional languages like Marra (see also Garde 2013 for details on similar strategies used by Bininj Gunwok speakers), but we also see newer strategies based on literacy (i.e. using initials) as in (5.5).

Given that Kriol speakers and Marra speakers employ similar politeness strategies and pragmatics when talking to low-level avoidance kin, this is evidence that culturally embedded communicative practices can be maintained in the pragmatics of supplanting languages like Kriol. This evokes Eades' findings (1983; 1988; 2013) that English was being used by Aboriginal people in South-East Queensland in ways that correspond to the pragmatics of traditional Aboriginal languages.
In addition to the linguistic evidence already given, Kriol speakers habitually observe gestural and non-verbal communicative practices that are determined and influenced by kinship rules and relationships. A ubiquitous manifestation of this is the practice of 'two-finger politeness', or the use of *tu bingga* 'two hands'.

Using *tu bingga* is most readily associated with interactions between brothers-in-law (as shown in Figure 5–14) but is also used between male *muluri* (mother-in-law’s-brother/male’s-sister’s-son-in-law) and *lambarra* (father-in-law/son-in-law). When passing, giving or receiving an object, it must be done either with both hands or with the non-giving hand touching the elbow of the arm that handles the object. This can also extend to other gestures, such as waving, where the non-waving hand touches the elbow of the waving arm. This gesture is recognisable to anyone familiar with customer service etiquette in much of East Asia but in those instances, it is regulated by power, age or business etiquette and not typically governed by kinship per se.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined language shift from Marra to Kriol through the domain of kinship and person reference, paying equal attention to both languages. Broadly, this chapter has revealed instances of loss across the language shift boundary, examples of maintenance, and some ways in which Kriol speakers are making innovations that are not based on immediate superstrate or substrate languages.

Instances of loss across the language shift boundary were most obviously shown in §5.4. That section discussed Marra’s elegant system of kinterms, where multiple forms – often

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{83}}\text{The reason Kriol speakers refer to using *tu bingga* (from the English 'two fingers') rather than a derivative of 'two hands' (which seems more appropriate to an English speaker), is because the word for 'hand' in Kriol is *bingga* – derived from the English word 'finger'.}\]
suppletive – are used within each kin category (based on whether the term is used vocatively or if the propositus is the speaker, listener or a third party), and showed that this is not found in Kriol. Similarly, suppletive dyadic forms that were documented in Marra are not found in Kriol, although Kriol speakers do still commonly use dyads in pragmatically similar ways. Skewing, however, is not attested among Kriol speakers, whereas Marra people made use of patrilineal, Omaha-type skewing, most likely connected to the ontological importance of patrilineal semi-moieties.

Section 5.3 compared kin categories that Kriol speakers encode in the set of kinterms they use with the system used by Marra speakers. This also revealed several examples of loss, or more specifically the collapsing of categories in the shift from Marra to Kriol. Kriol kinterms do not compulsorily encode birth order among siblings, parents’ siblings and siblings’ offspring as Marra kinterms do. A number of distinctions made by Marra kinterms in affinal categories are also not found in Kriol. Table 5–10 summarises the total number of kinterms (roots) and kin categories that are attested in Marra and Kriol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marra</th>
<th>Kriol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinterms attested (roots only)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin categories</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin categories after collapsing minimally marked gender distinctions (n- feminine prefix vs. null)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5–10: Quantification of kinterms and kin categories attested in Marra and Kriol

Table 5–10 shows that the lexicon of Marra contains more kinterms than is found in Kriol and that they distinguish more kin categories than are used by Kriol speakers. As suggested above, this shows a degree of loss of terminology and categorisation across the language shift boundary. Yet the comparison of kin categories presented in §5.3 also showed that many distinctions found in Marra persist in Kriol – distinctions that do not occur in Kriol’s lexifier, English. This demonstrates a degree of maintenance commensurate to the examples of loss.

Other areas show an even greater persistence of features, in particular person reference and the use of kinterms in discourse. Kriol speakers, like speakers of Marra and other Australian languages, rely heavily on the use of kinterms to achieve person reference – more so than do non-Indigenous English speakers. The finer pragmatics of person reference and the use of kinterms are likewise similar in Marra and Kriol. Politeness strategies such as the use of plural pronouns between low-level avoidance kin and the use of placeholders like wumburlana (Marra) and sambidi (Kriol) to signify the culturally-
determined avoidance of certain names is evidenced in both languages. Examples of maintenance are also found in the forms of kinterms themselves: §5.5.5 describes how six of the thirty-two Kriol kinterms are related to Marra in both form and the categories they encode.

Exploring the domain of kinship among Kriol speakers also reveals innovations that are not found in Marra or other substrate languages, or in English. In particular, Kriol speakers have extended the use of self-reciprocal kinterms which occur relatively infrequently in Marra. With the introduction of the self-reciprocal kinterms *gudi* and *gabarani*, Kriol speakers have developed a system whereby all peers can be referred to by a self-reciprocal kinterm. The introduction of the kinterms that complete this system has not come directly from immediate substrate languages nor from the lexifying language, but rather as borrowings from traditional languages that are still widely used in neighbouring regions. If there is an expectation that a fully-developed creole like Kriol would only borrow additional lexical material from a dominant lexifier, this is not borne out by the examples of *gudi* and *gabarani*.

The noteworthy recent introduction of basic kinterms like *gudi* and *gabarani*, appears to reflect a broader trend among young Kriol speakers towards a level of playfulness and adaptability in the kinterms they use. Kin categories themselves appear to be quite stable, but terms associated with the categories are subject to young people experimenting with trends and innovations. Trendy kinterms like *genga* 'brother-in-law', *blouk* (from bloke, meaning 'brother') and the truncation of *gabarani* to *gaps* demonstrate a willingness to incorporate and adapt new forms into the domain of kinship, yet not obviously in the direction of the lexifier. Kinterms like *blouk* and *genga* are derived from English, but their etymons are not kinterms. Kriol speakers have adopted and adapted these terms and applied them to kin categories that exist in their ontology, an ontology which remains deeply rooted to pre-contact kinship systems. However, it remains to be seen whether these currently popular kinterms endure.

One feature of Marra and Kriol kinship not discussed in careful detail in this chapter is the importance and function of semi-moieties. The skewing that Marra speakers apply to certain kinterms (described in §5.4.2) appears to relate the importance of semi-moieties in local ontologies. However, it was shown that skewing does not occur in Kriol. While this may suggest a reduction in the importance or salience of semi-moieties to Kriol speakers and an inability of the system of basic Kriol kinterms to relate to the semi-moieties, an alternative view can be put forward. With recent innovations in the system
of self-reciprocal kinterms that Kriol speakers use, it is a straightforward matter to map the radial representation of the system onto semi-moieties and corresponding roles, as shown in Figure 5–15:

Figure 5–15: Self-reciprocal kinterms in Kriol mapped to semi-moieties and semi-moety associated roles

Figure 5–15 suggests that, like the proposed function of skewing in Marra, the prevalence of self-reciprocal kinterms in Kriol allows semi-moiet-y-based relationships to retain relevance or prominence within the system of basic kinterms. For a Kriol speaker, self-reciprocal kinterms with their frequent use in discourse could allow for easy identification or increased salience of semi-moiet-y-based roles. For example, looking at Figure 5–15, it can be seen that it is cognitively easy for a Kriol speaker to understand that anyone they call gabarani, abija or barn.ga/kas is their junggayi. This is not dissimilar to Omaha-skewing in Marra allowing Marra speakers to easily understand that anyone they call gardigardi, gajirri or munyumunyu is their junggayi (see Table 5–3). This example reflects the overall conclusions of this chapter, as we see examples of loss (lack of skewing in Kriol), innovation (a new system of self-reciprocals in Kriol) and maintenance (the continued ability of basic kinterms to link to culturally important roles pertaining to semi-moiety membership).
6  

**BUSH MEDICINE KNOWLEDGE IN MARRA AND KRIOL – A FIRST PHARMACOPEIA**

Aspects of the language shift boundary between Marra and Kriol that have been considered in previous chapters include a survey of substrate lexemes that pervade Kriol and a comparison of kinship and kin terminology in Kriol with Marra kinship terminology and systems. The next two chapters turn to the domain of ethnobiology, looking specifically at the sub-domain of traditional medicine, referred to here as 'bush medicine'. A first pharmacopoeia of bush medicine as used by Marra people is offered, noting ethnobiological knowledge pertaining to uses and preparations of each bush medicine taxon. The bulk of discussion of each taxon, however, does not relate to botanical and medicinal features, as this is regularly described in other sources. Instead, more attention is paid to examining existing documentation pertaining to each taxon relating specifically to Marra people and residents of the Roper River region. By examining this documentation, descriptions of the maintenance and/or decline of knowledge and practices relating to each taxon is provided. In these descriptions, two groups are delineated: Marra speakers (including those who contributed to Marra documentation accompanying the present study and those who have passed away but contributed to existing documentation) and L1 Kriol speakers between the ages of 20 and 45.

In approaching the broad topic of ethnobiological knowledge, it was important to limit the research to a representative sub-topic to ensure that the scope of the research was manageable for the purposes of this study. Bush medicine was selected because it is a domain where there is evidence that loss of traditional knowledge is occurring across the language shift boundary between those who speak Marra and those who speak only Kriol. This then provides a contrast to the previous two chapters which highlighted aspects of Marra language and culture that have clear indications of maintenance among L1 Kriol speakers. It was once claimed that “as civilisation spreads into primitive areas, the first aspect of primitive culture to be lost is knowledge of the use of plants as medicine” (Farnsworth 1966 in Webb 1969). Previous health research in Ngukurr had likewise found “little evidence that people were currently using bush medicines on a regular basis” (Senior 2003: 115). While it is apparent that loss of knowledge and traditions relating to bush medicine is occurring, the information presented in this chapter demonstrates that bush medicine knowledge and practices are to some degree
being maintained among Kriol speaking young adults. This contrasts with Farnsworth and Senior’s suggestion in the above quotes.

Yet diminished knowledge among younger generations is plainly apparent. This exists in both expressed knowledge (i.e. knowledge of terminology and oral demonstration of knowledge) and in practice, that is, the degree to which young people can and do name, recognise, harvest, prepare and use various traditional medicines.

Bush medicine is just one domain of traditional knowledge in which a disparity between generations appears to exist, so the decision to focus on it here is somewhat arbitrary. Examples of other domains of knowledge that appear to be significantly reduced among young adult Kriol speakers, in particular those residing primarily in Ngukurr, include:

- Saltwater fishing and hunting: e.g. dugong hunting, names of dugong types, saltwater fish species
- Knowledge of mangrove and coastal land ecosystems
- Spear making and hunting with spears
- Traditional practices relating to fire (e.g. lighting fires, use in hunting)
- Topographic nomenclature and knowledge
- Water transport and navigation, including making and using canoes.

A final contributing factor leading to the selection of bush medicine as the main theme of this chapter is that several of the elders who informed this study are particularly passionate and knowledgeable on the topic and so the work presented below reflects their influence, especially that of Betty Naburrunuyurr Roberts who was keenly supportive of this work and is an ardent proponent of bush medicine as used by Marra people.

The information presented in this chapter is built upon in the following chapter which includes discourse analysis of key texts relating to bush medicine, paying particular attention to some of the themes that Marra elders cover in recorded texts about specific bush medicine taxa. This is contrasted with discussion on how young Kriol speakers talk about bush medicine and the level of knowledge and practical use they display in general. A small quantitative study is detailed and, finally, another sub-domain within ethnobiology – lizards – is briefly analysed to offer an indication of whether the findings presented on bush medicine are consistent with other domains of knowledge within ethnobiology.
6.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO BUSH MEDICINE

We had our own medicine. We had doctors of our own – doctors who used to give a man life again. Now young people are giving that away. The old people have still got this medicine, but they’re frightened to show white people. Why? Because of the mission. I’m asking the old people to show the young people how, a long time ago, when we were hurt, how to stop it – how to get up. (Magarruminya in Scarlett, White and Reid 1982: 154)

Bush medicine in the context of Aboriginal Australia refers to practices of medical treatment that utilise (predominantly) flora indigenous to the area in which any given cultural group live. It is one domain of health beliefs and practices rooted in pre-contact times, with the other main domain being the use of traditional healers and ‘sorcery’ e.g. singing. These two domains and methods of treatment which stem from pre-contact times continue to be used today in remote communities such as Ngukurr, as described in some detail by Senior (2003). In addition to pre-contact-derived treatments, communities like Ngukurr now rely heavily on Western medicine, provided through Government health services and health care. Christian prayer and worship also plays a role in healing and treatment in places like Ngukurr.

When Aboriginal practitioners use the term ‘bush medicine’ in reference to a domain of cultural knowledge and practice, they encompass the collection, preparation and administering processes of traditional medicines and, to a lesser extent, the diagnosis of illness and prescription of bush medicine treatments. When referring to tangible referents, the noun ‘bush medicine’ as used by Aboriginal practitioners, may refer to: a species of plant or bush medicine taxon, individual intact/growing plant(s), the relevant part of the plant utilised as medicine, harvested plants/plant parts, medicine in preparation, and the final preparation. Different medicines utilise specific parts of the relevant plant species, including roots, bulbs, bark (inner and/or outer), leaves or specifically, new growth. Only in rare instances are different taxa mixed – typically a single taxon is prescribed and prepared as a treatment. Bush medicine is most often

84 There are a few examples of non-botanical organisms and materials such as clay, antbed and some insects being used in bush medicine but the bulk of remedies are botanical in nature (Scarlett, White and Reid 1982: 161).

85 Interestingly, Indigenous language hypernyms covering ‘bush medicine’ are rare and not attested in the Roper Region (Baker 2007: 247). Across published texts in various Indigenous languages, L1 Indigenous language speakers invariably borrow the English term ‘medicine’ or ‘bush medicine’ (see e.g. Heath 1978b: 204; Heath 1980b: 116–117).
prepared as inhalants, rubs, liniments or antiseptics although some are ingested (Isaacs 1987: 197).

Bush medicine can be used to treat a wide range of ailments including diseases, viruses, or infections (internal or external) or it can be used to alleviate symptoms (e.g. for pain relief). A study of bush medicine use among Yolŋu found that about one-quarter of remedies were used to treat skin lesions and wounds and about half treated respiratory complaints, colds and flus, gastro-intestinal complaints and general pain relief. The remaining treatments were for eye, tooth and ear complaints and bites and stings (Scarlett, White and Reid 1982). Similarly, a recent study of Mangarrayi and Yangman uses of plants found that thirty-seven species (11.3% of total plant species) were reported as having medicinal uses. Sixteen species treated respiratory ailments, nine treated skin ailments, four treated stomach ailments and the remaining were general medicines or treated "other ailments" (Roberts et al. 2011: 159). There is further evidence that Aboriginal practitioners of bush medicine use it to treat other ailments such as cancer (Shahid et al. 2010) and venereal diseases (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990), but the bulk of treatments target those mentioned by Scarlett, White et al. (1982).

6.1.1 Previous Research on Bush Medicine

The Yolŋu study mentioned above is one of the earlier detailed ethnobotanical and ethnographic studies of bush medicine as used by an individual language group. A study by Webb (1969) represents an early attempt at a thorough pan-linguistic group collation of medicinal species and their applications and also includes a discussion of pharmacological properties of a number of species. In the 1980s, some major studies were undertaken that were regional, focusing on areas within the Northern Territory. A volume by Barr et al. (1988) has detailed descriptions and illustrations of 63 types of bush medicine commonly found in various parts of the Northern Territory. As well as containing botanical information and information on the use and preparation of the medicine, the study also includes some chemical analysis of the species under discussion. Brock (1988) is primarily a botanical guide to species commonly found in the northern part of the Northern Territory, but Aboriginal uses of plants – including medicinal uses – are frequently and reliably given. For the drier regions of Central Australia, Latz (1995) presents an ethnobotanical study of plant use among a number of contiguous language groups covering a large area of Central Australia. He found that over 70 species were used for medicinal purposes (compared with around 140 species used as food sources).
Research carried out with individual language groups is another significant body of information. Such information is often collected by linguists whose ethnobotanical documentation is incorporated into general language documentation and description. Descriptive linguists may be limited by the degree of botanical expertise and time available to them resulting in sometimes incomplete or inaccurate ethnobotanical descriptions but are none the less often a rich and unique source of information. For the Roper River region, Heath’s dictionaries document a large number of plant species, usually providing a species name along with local plant names. Unfortunately, Heath generally did not collate information on medicinal uses of plants. The published documentation on Alawa (especially Sharpe 2001a; 2001b) offers comparatively greater detail on medicinal uses of plants than is found in descriptions of other languages in the region. It is apparent that Sharpe went to some lengths to underpin her work with reliable botanical information. Waddy’s study of classification of plants and animals among Anindilyakwa people (1988) is thorough but focuses on the emic classification of plants (and animals) rather than detailed descriptions of their uses.

Approaching the topic via a different discipline, ethnobiological studies led by scientists, especially botanists, are another source of information. Indeed, Anindilyakwa plant uses were described in detail not by Waddy, but by a botanist, Dulcie Levitt (1981). Particularly noteworthy is the work carried out by Glenn Wightman, who for over 30 years has collaborated with speakers of endangered languages, biologists and linguists to produce numerous volumes of ethnobotanical and ethnobiological descriptions for languages covering much of the Northern Territory. Wightman’s work has become more detailed and linguistically sophisticated over time, as evidenced in some of the more recent publications such as those based on the knowledge of Jawoyn people (Winydjorrodj et al. 2005), Gurindji, Bilinarra and Malngin people (Hector et al. 2012), Dalabon people (Bordulk et al. 2012) and Mangarrayi and Yangman people (Roberts et al. 2011).

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86 Even in Heath’s *Nunggubuyu Dictionary* (the language he documented in the most detail), he provides very little information on medicinal uses of plants, despite including a specific section on ethnobotanical knowledge (1982b: 345–358). However, the text collections Heath presents do refer to bush medicine. Texts about bush medicine were provided in Nunggubuyu by Larrangana, Reuben (Mindhiwugag), Gaagadug and Maadi (Heath 1980b: 443–462), in Ngandi by Sam Thompson (Heath 1978b: 202–204) and a brief passage in Ritharrŋu by Munuma (Willy) (Heath 1980c: 117).
As mentioned above, some studies on bush medicine have also involved scientific analysis into pharmacological properties of medicinal plants (see e.g. Barr et al. 1988) to assess the efficacy of a number of bush medicine species in Western scientific terms. Advances in ethnopharmacological research in recent years are evident. A study of antibacterial properties of thirty-nine bush medicine plants from across Australia found that twelve species exhibited antibacterial activity (Palombo and Semple 2001), including one species used and highly regarded by Marra people and Kriol speakers alike (*dumbuyumbu, Santalum lanceolatum*). A similar study assessed forty species for antiviral properties and found that six species displayed antiviral activity, including one species that is likely to be that known to Marra elders as *jirrama* (*Pterocaulon sphacelatum*) (Semple et al. 1998). This prompted further research to isolate the antiviral compounds found in the species, identifying compounds that "inhibit the replication of rhinoviruses, the most frequent causative agent of the common cold" (Semple et al. 1999: 283).

It is important to consider bush medicine as only one component of a larger system of physical and mental health care, practices and beliefs held and used by Indigenous people. As Senior found in Ngukurr, "some sicknesses and many deaths are attributable to sorcery" (2001: 17). Reid (1983: xix) likewise argues that sorcery is a core component of Yolŋu health systems:

> An attack by a sorcerer was almost always cited as the cause of a life-threatening illness or death. The precipitating factors – such as a fight, a breach of the law or adultery – varied, but the means were, in most cases, the same.

A healer using medicinal charms or sorcery may be used when bush medicine treatments are unsuccessful or to complement bush medicine treatments. This may occur "in serious illnesses believed to have 'deeper' causes" (Isaacs 1987:198).

But "supernatural" and "natural" derived illnesses and treatments are not dichotomised by Aboriginal people in the same way that Europeans might distinguish between the two. Scarlett et al. argue that while "sorcery and supernatural agents form an important, possibly the most important, component of the Yolŋu view of illness and death ... there is no clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural" (1982: 165–166). An example of "natural" treatment such as bush medicine complementing "supernatural" treatment is given in the same study in which a patient with a splinter was treated with bush medicine but also put through a purification ceremony, seemingly to safeguard from affliction from sorcery-borne illness(es) (Scarlett, White and Reid 1982: 165).
Given the above, it is important to remember that bush medicine practices are part of a larger and distinctive system of health care which differs from notions of health and health care based on the Western scientific method that are likely to be familiar to most readers. Yet sorcery and “supernatural” health treatments and beliefs are excluded from this study for reasons of space and because botanical-based health beliefs and treatment is generally a more straightforward field of enquiry that better lends itself to quantifiable analyses.

6.1.2 Methodology

The following sections discuss the use of bush medicine among Marra speakers and compare that with knowledge and use of bush medicine exhibited by L1 Kriol speakers. The discussion is structured around individual taxa. Each taxon and the two groups’ knowledge and use of it, and the role it plays in their lives, is considered on a taxon-by-taxon basis, thereby creating a first pharmacopeia of Marra bush medicine. The information presented has been gathered throughout fieldwork and informed by existing documentation. In terms of information garnered via my own fieldwork, this has taken the form of what McClatchey (2011) calls secondary and tertiary evidence. Primary evidence – that is, actual plant samples – were not taken, due to limitations of my own training and the scope of this study. Instead I rely on photographic, audio and written documentation which is what McClatchey calls "secondary or documentary evidence" (ibid: 286). Audio recordings relating to bush medicine consist of unprompted stories and explanations offered by Marra elders as well as information gleaned through my own leading questions and interviews. This secondary evidence is complemented by tertiary, or observational, evidence I have gathered through living in Ngukurr and working with elders since 2004. I have also referred extensively to existing documentation relating to bush medicine used by Marra people. These existing resources are discussed in the following section.

6.2 Bush Medicine and Older Generations of Marra People

The Marra elders who informed this study are regular users of bush medicine and confidently expound knowledge on the topic. This indicates that they hold a level of knowledge considered “expert” in the context of contemporary life in Ngukurr and that the use and knowledge of bush medicine is ontologically important. The pervasiveness of bush medicine knowledge and use that Marra elders in Ngukurr demonstrate became obvious to me, through both their verbal communication of such knowledge and by my own observations. While living in and visiting the community and working with elders,
bush medicine was a common topic of discussion. For example, elders would often casually indicate a plant and describe its medicinal use. Or health complaints (either their own or another relative’s) would frequently be accompanied by a desire for bush medicine and often lead to requests for lifts in a vehicle to obtain the desired medicine. But such ‘chat’ by elders was not just rhetoric. During fieldwork undertaken for this thesis and in years prior while working in the community, I too took regular trips away from Ngukurr itself, travelling to sites or other communities in the region. On these trips, I was almost always accompanied by one or more elders and travel would typically incorporate the collection of bush medicine (see also Dickson 2005a; 2005b; 2005c). Collection was usually done in (what seemed to me) a distinctly casual way: often when returning to the community at the conclusion of a trip, I would be instructed to slow down or stop at a particular point. A brief pause in the journey would then result in one (or more) of the elders efficiently acquiring a good deal of whichever particular medicine they had seen or knew to be in the area. This was then taken back to Ngukurr, prepared and used for treating their own ailments and/or distributed to treat others in their family, often sicker and more incapacitated senior people. The degree of efficiency, competency and matter-of-factness with which elders procured bush medicine during such trips indicated a high degree of knowledge about bush medicine and that bush medicine practices were salient in their minds.

To complement my own observational and documentary evidence on the use of bush medicine among older generations of Marra people, I have sourced and incorporated evidence from a range of existing materials that document bush medicine and associated practices. The four key references sourced and utilised are:

1. Heath’s volume on the Marra language (1981): the value in this reference specific to bush medicine is mainly that it lists over 200 Marra plant names and offers species names for most of these (although not without error – see discussion on gulban below). None of the 42 Marra texts in the publication focus specifically on bush medicine nor does the dictionary make explicit mention of plant species used as bush medicine. Despite listing over 200 Marra plant names, only two uncommon plants are mentioned as being used as medicine (discussed in §6.3.12) while the most common species used as bush medicine are not noted as such.

2. Archived video footage created by Nganiyurlma Media Association recorded in the 1980s: this now-defunct Ngukurr-based organisation was keenly aware that much linguistic and cultural knowledge held by elders was under significant threat of being lost. As part of their efforts to document threatened knowledge and languages, they
dedicated several hours of footage to knowledge pertaining to bush medicine. Marra elder Ginger Riley was one of the main elders featured in this documentation. Of particular relevance to this study is a 72-minute edited video, *Bush Medicine From Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990) which features a group of senior men (including Ginger Riley) demonstrating and describing the collection, preparation and use of the ten medicinal plant species. This footage is bookended by interviews with a local senior health worker, Alex Thompson, discussing the importance of bush medicine in relation to the government provision of health services and contemporary community health practices as they were in the 1980s. The unedited footage that contributed to that video has also informed this study.

3. A small in-house publication in three volumes, *Marra plants and their uses* (Huddleston et al. n.d. (a); n.d. (b); n.d. (c)), created by Diwurruwurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation in the 1990s. Thirty-three plants and their uses are described based on information provided by four of the ‘Joshua sisters’ (see §2.4.5.2): Gertie Huddlestone, Dinah Garadji, Angelina George (all deceased) and Betty Roberts, who contributed extensively to this study. Of the thirty-three plant uses documented, eleven species are noted as used as bush medicine.

4. A series of texts written in Marra by Freda Roberts and Betty Roberts in 2007 (see Appendix 3). They are short monolingual texts describing fourteen species. The texts are only 10–50 words but provide a unique example of Marra-centric ‘folk’-documentation of bush medicine knowledge.

In addition to these major sources, two further documents on Marra and two publications on Alawa were also consulted: 87

- A draft volume on Marra ethnobiology, compiled by Glenn Wightman of Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife. The information provided in this draft is mostly a re-constitution of the information provided in the previously mentioned reference on *Marra plants and their uses* compiled by Diwurruwurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation in the 1990s.

87 The Alawa sources are considered relevant as Alawa and Marra are neighbouring language groups and the non-coastal environment of Marra country shares many similarities with the geography of Alawa country. Many bush medicine practices are shared and, linguistically, a number of botanical species’ names are cognate in the two languages.
• *Ruwu Alawirrynun: Alawa Plant Book* (Sharpe 2001b); and
• *Alawa ethnobotany: Aboriginal plant use from Minyerri, Northern Australia* (Wightman, Jackson, and Williams 1991).

By combining the information recovered from the above resources along with evidence gathered during fieldwork, I have been able to synthesise a first pharmacopeia of bush medicine as used by Marra people. The information provided in the following section is, to date, the most comprehensive compilation of such data and the first time that information specific to bush medicine and Marra people has been collated. It is also the first time that bush medicine knowledge among Kriol speakers has been explicitly discussed and presented.

### 6.3 A FIRST PHARMACOPEIA OF MARRA BUSH MEDICINE

By combing the various sources mentioned above, it is possible to build a preliminary description of bush medicine as used by Marra people. It is by no means complete and contains gaps due to, for example, shortcomings in my own botanical knowledge, loss of knowledge about various bush medicine taxa already evident among Marra people and inevitable gaps in data gathered during fieldwork on those species known to and used by Marra people. Nevertheless, via the various sources listed above, twenty-five bush medicines used by Marra people are discussed below. Each taxon listed is accompanied by information including its scientific name, common names in use, its reported use and preparation, commentary on its actual use in contemporary contexts and awareness and use of the medicine among young L1 Kriol-speaking people in Ngukurr.

#### 6.3.1 GULBAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Melaleuca stenostachya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Ti-tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Gulban, ti-tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Colds and flu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash or inhalant. Sometimes drunk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Widely known and used by older generations. Known to some in younger generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Also popular as a herb used to flavour meat cooked in ground ovens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General botanical and ethnomedical references</td>
<td>None in general sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In previous linguistic descriptions of languages in the Roper River area, *gulban* has been attributed to the species *Melaleuca stenostachya* (see e.g. Heath 1981; Sharpe 2001). *Gulban* is a bush medicine that remains valued and popular among older people who are confident users of bush medicine. For example, it is one of the medicines that would be collected incidentally by elders during bush trips carried out as part of this study. At the Ngukurr Language Centre – the local base in Ngukurr used for much of this study – a *gulban* tree growing in the yard has its leaves sporadically harvested by anonymous users. The term *gulban* is also used in Alawa and Sharpe supports its popularity saying it is “highly regarded” and “used in preference to ‘clinic medicine’ (western drugs)” (Sharpe 2001a: 127). Ginger Riley discussed *gulban* in detail while documenting bush medicine with Nganiyurlma Media Association in the 1980s. Riley’s discourse on *gulban* is analysed in detail in the following chapter (§7.1.2). Freda and Betty Roberts (2007) likewise argued for its effectiveness:

(6.1) Nana ninyayana gudagaya yumarr medicine
the[M] this_kind already good medicine
na-janurr-ni ngaba na-flu-ni.
M[OBL]-snot-PURP and M[OBL]-flu-PURP
This type is really good medicine for (treating) mucus and flu.

Despite its apparent popularity and effectiveness, young Kriol speaking adults are less familiar with *gulban* as a type of bush medicine and are often unfamiliar with the name, although knowledge and awareness of the medicine is still evident. During interviews, Anthony Daniels (aged 45), a partial Marra speaker, was clearly familiar with *gulban*. A younger woman in her early 30s demonstrated some familiarity, alluding to an alternative use of the plant as a herb for flavouring roasted meat:

(6.2) Maidi lil (1.8) weya thei pudu la daga, ngi? (1.4)
maybe little that 3PL pud:TR LOC food TAG
Meigi lil, wanim o...
make:TR little whats-it or
It might be a little... that they put into/onto food, isn't it? Make a small, thingy, or...

Although she recognised the plant name to some degree, she was not able to provide clear information on it and did not recognise it as a bush medicine despite having participated in a local Indigenous ranger program for several years which has as one of its objectives the maintenance of such ethnobiological knowledge. Two male Kriol speakers in their 20s did not recognise the term *gulban* at all, but interestingly, the youngest person interviewed – a woman in her early 20s – was the only person under 40
who, without prompting, proffered *gulban* as a type of bush medicine and could confidently provide further information:

(6.3)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Kriol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>gulban</td>
<td>a type of bush medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thei</td>
<td>gin</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yusu</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>bedkol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wen</td>
<td>dirnghi</td>
<td>for flu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indit</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wen</td>
<td>oldei</td>
<td>for flu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meigi</td>
<td>det</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>det</td>
<td>janurr</td>
<td>TR:TAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klinimap</td>
<td>yu</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tjes</td>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>chest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding *gulban*, they can use it to treat flu. When they drink it, right? And when they smell the leaves, they use it as a wash, it makes the snot come out and clears your chest.

Although *gulban* is instantly recognisable and used by Marra elders, knowledge of this medicine appears to have dissipated quite significantly among younger generations in Ngukurr although some do demonstrate continuing knowledge.

### 6.3.2 DUMBUYUMBU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th><em>Santalum lanceolatum</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Sandalwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Dumbuyumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Multiple functions including treating colds, general pain relief, sores, high blood pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Leaves (including twigs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and drunk or used as a wash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Widely known and used by all adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Central Australia ethnobotany: Latz (1995: 261)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to *gulban* and other bush medicines whose use is limited to older generations, *dumbuyumbu* is the only bush medicine well-known to all informants interviewed on the topic, regardless of age. It is one of the most – if not the most – highly regarded of bush medicines available to people in Ngukurr. This appears to be because of its perceived effectiveness, and for the wide range of symptoms and ailments it treats. Sharpe, referring to Alawa people, concurs:
This species is highly regarded as a medicine for a suite of disorders, it is used in preference to ‘clinic medicines’. (Sharpe 2001a: 135)

The emic perception of *dumbuyumbu*’s effectiveness is supported by scientific analysis. An analysis of thirty-nine bush medicine plants (Palombo and Semple 2001) found that twelve exhibited antibacterial properties. *Dumbuyumbu* was one of those twelve, shown to inhibit the growth of a bacteria causing food-borne illness, *Bacillus cereus* – one of eight bacterial species that the medicines were tested against for antibacterial effects.

*Santalum lanceolatum* is found across most of mainland Australia and many language groups utilise it as food and/or medicine. Latz discusses its use in Central Australia as primarily a food source (for its fruit) and mentions that it “has medicinal uses in other parts of Australia” (1995: 261). In my own experiences of travelling around the Roper River Region, *dumbuyumbu* is not especially common. Yet elders and regular users are often familiar with one or more specific locations where they are usually able to source the medicine. During fieldtrips for this study, I made multiple car-trips with a number of different community members in Ngukurr (generally aged 50+) to a location about one kilometre away from the community where several *dumbuyumbu* trees grow. On approximately half of the times we visited the site, the trees bore a sufficient number of new shoots to warrant harvesting. On other occasions we returned empty-handed, usually because leaves had been recently harvested by other community members. I also often noticed prepared *dumbuyumbu* (a distinctive deep reddish-orange liquid) while travelling locally within Ngukurr community, when visiting or picking up senior or elderly residents who carried with them bottle(s) of prepared *dumbuyumbu* ready for their own consumption or to be distributed to a sick relative. There is good evidence suggesting that knowledge of the medicine, and medicinal value attributed to it, is being maintained among younger generations. During interviews with younger Ngukurr residents, *dumbuyumbu* was the only bush medicine that all could name and describe with confidence.

Yet it is worth considering other factors besides the medicine’s efficacy that potentially bolster the salience of *dumbuyumbu* among Kriol speakers. First, most of the traditional languages of the region have cognates of the form *dumbuyumbu*, which is not the case for most other bush medicines. Regional names for *Santalum lanceolatum* are tabled below:
Table 6–1: Names of Santalum lanceolatum in languages of the Roper River region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marra</td>
<td>dumbuyumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alawa</td>
<td>dumbuyumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warndarrang</td>
<td>dumbuyumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngandi</td>
<td>ma-dumbuyumbu, ma-dhumbudhumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharrŋu/ Wägilak</td>
<td>dhumbudhumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunggubuyu</td>
<td>dumburumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalakgan</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanyuwa</td>
<td>ma-rdumbuyumbu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangarrayi</td>
<td>dumbulyumbul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, it is worth considering that salience of the plant may be assisted by the word内部 rhyme, or “rhyming jingle” (Pawley 2010), in its name that increases its phonological salience. Thirdly, unlike a number of other bush medicine species that have other uses (most often as a food source), dumbuyumbu’s main or exclusive use — at least as it is known to people of Ngukurr — is medicinal. It is possible that all these reasons contribute to dumbuyumbu’s position as the best known example of bush medicine among Kriol speaking people in Ngukurr.

6.3.3 YURRMURU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Buchanania obovata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Green plum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Grinplam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Skin sores, toothache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Bark (inner bark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people and some younger people. Still used occasionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>This plant is better known for its seasonal fruit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buchanania obovata is found across a large part of northern Australia and is perhaps best known for its tasty seasonal fruit, hence the name used in English and Kriol: green plum/grinplam. Its medicinal uses are widely reported (Brock 1988: 105) and although

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\[88\] Note however that burduga is another plant used exclusively as medicine and it is not well-known among younger generations, as discussed in §7.2.
Marra people and a number of Kriol speakers are familiar with it, I have not witnessed it being collected for medicinal purposes, despite having collected the seasonal fruit of *yurrmurru* on a number of occasions with a range of Aboriginal people. The species was not one of the ten featured on the *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* video (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990), but its use as a medicine has been noted by senior Marra women and among Alawa people (Huddleston et al. n.d. (a); Wightman, Jackson and Williams 1991). Its status as a bush medicine appears to be somewhat marginal when compared to other more common or more valued medicines.

Accordingly, only around half (six of fourteen) of the young Kriol speakers surveyed knew *Buchanania obovata* (referred to by Kriol speakers as *plam* or *grinplam*) as a medicine. Yet all are familiar with the plant and are likely to have participated in collecting its fruit. Some could provide quite detailed knowledge of its use as medicine:

\[(6.4)\]

1 EN: \textit{en (1.6) plam. plamtri (1.0) ba tutheik (2.0)}

\text{and... plum, plum tree... for toothache.}

2 GD: \textit{[green-] [green plum?}

3 EN: \textit{[d-] [d-}

4 EN: \textit{m:: det (0.8) bakpat en det (1.3) det lif na (1.8)}

\text{mm, the bark and the... the leaves}

5 GD: \textit{yu bin dringgim than? o yu dringgim o wani?}

\text{have you drunk it? or do you drink it or what?}

6 EN: \textit{(nomo yu XX) yu jis. munyurruma det lifpat en det. bak}

\text{(no you XX) you just break up the leaves and the bark (into small pieces)}

7 GD: \textit{mm}

8 EN: \textit{en yu jis pudu weya pein yu abum}

\text{and you just put it where you have pain}

9 EN: \textit{la det tuth, yu jis, holdum ja}

\text{on the teeth: you just hold it there}

10 EN: \textit{en yu garra meiksho spitimatbat, nomo julurum}

\text{and you have to ensure you spit it out, don't swallow it}

11 GD: \textit{en imin wek gudwei?}

\text{and did it work well?}

12 EN: \textit{im wek. streitawei im wek yuwai}

\text{it works. it works immediately, yes.}

Despite the display of knowledge in (6.4), only around half of those aged under 40 who were interviewed identified the species as a bush medicine, indicating its contemporary use is marginal. Its main application as a treatment for toothache is probably being maintained (albeit only partially) because of the lack of Western dental care available in remote Aboriginal communities.
### 6.3.4 Burduga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Clerodendrum floribundum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Burduga (if known)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Leaves, inner bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Flu, sores, ear infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled or infused and used as a wash, drunk or gargled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people, not commonly known to adults and younger people. Rarely used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General botanical and ethnobotanical references</td>
<td>Botanical: Brock (1988: 122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central Australia ethnobotany: Latz (1995: 149)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Clerodendrum floribundum* is found across a large stretch of northern Australia and over twenty other species of the *Clerodendrum* genus are used medicinally across Asia and the Pacific (Barr et al. 1988: 77). Regionally, the plant is known as *burduga* in Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Nungubuyu and Wāgilak/Ritharrŋu. In lieu of the species having an English-based name, it is also called *burduga* in Roper Kriol (to those who know it).

The reported uses of *burduga* indicate that is a multi-purpose cure-all. Sources report a range of functions including treatment of coughs, colds, headache, fever, general pain (internal or external), diarrhoea, sores, itches and ear infections (Barr et al. 1988; Brock 1988; Huddleston et al. n.d. (a)). The following endorsement is from Alawa elder Willie Gudabi who demonstrated the collection, preparation and application of *burduga* in *Bush Medicine From Ngukurr*:


---

89 In Ngandi, *burduga* occurs with the noun class prefixes *gu-* or *ma-* . In Yanyuwa, it is called *ma-burdala* which is a likely cognate. Two names are recorded for Mangarrayi: a cognate form, *bordoga*, and another term, *mornang* (Roberts et al. 2011: 34). In more distant regional languages such as Dalabon and Rembarrnga it is called *molork*. 
This here would always win, beat the- kill the sickness. (The sickness would be) no more then. Only two days (and) it's finished then, kills it completely. This isn't like co-cough mixture of Europeans. (The) European one (i.e. medicine) we have to take it on and on and on and on until (we turn to) stone. Not this, this goes, this-. Only two days it takes. It's finished, gone. S/he won't be coughing then.

Observational evidence indicates that burduga is not a particularly commonly occurring plant, despite it occurring in a range of habitats and locations (Brock 1988; Nganuyurlma Media Association 1990). I have not been shown burduga while travelling with elders around the region nor am I aware of elders harvesting it while on bush trips (with or without me present). I have however been shown two burduga plants growing within the bounds of Ngukurr, both of which have been harvested on occasion.

Burduga and dumbuyumbu are similar in that they are highly regarded among senior bush medicine practitioners. They are plants known solely for their function as bush medicine and the names and use are cognate among a number of adjacent language groups in the Roper Region. But knowledge and use of burduga appears to have diminished to a significantly greater degree than that of dumbuyumbu. The edited section on burduga on the Bush Medicine From Ngukurr (Nganuyurlma Media Association 1990) video, from which the above quote is taken, lasts almost 10 minutes and shows Willie Gudabi, assisted by fellow Alawa elder, Barney Ellaga (Farrar) expertly demonstrating and discussing the medicine. Yet the questions posed to Gudabi throughout the excerpt indicate that the adult producers of the video – all local Indigenous men – had little knowledge of the medicine. They did not appear to be aware of its name, what it treats, where it grows, how to prepare it (infused not boiled) or administered (primarily used as a wash, rarely drunk). The following passage taken from the video is an example of local Indigenous video producers revealing a level of knowledge of burduga significantly less than that of the two elders being filmed. In this extract, Gudabi has just explained that it is used to treat coughs and as two off-camera Indigenous producers (labelled IP1 and IP2) make further enquiries:

(6.5)

1  WG:  **wal dijan bin oldei stabum (streit)awei det kof**
well this would always stop the cough immediately

2  WG:  **stabum. nomo kof kof na.**
stop it. no coughing then.

3  IP1:  **en hau yu garra yusim ba det kof?**
and how do you use it for (treating) coughs?
While the first off-camera question (in 3) could be considered a question appropriate to the discourse of reporting and interviewing where the producer might already know the answer, subsequent questions (in 5, 7 and 9) appear to be genuine enquiries for the benefit of the speaker’s information-seeking. This in turn suggests that the question in turn 3 was also speaker-centric information-seeking rather than a question posed primarily for the benefit of third-party viewers. It follows that if Kriol speaking adults in the late 1980s knew little about burduga, then today’s Kriol speaking adults will also be largely ignorant of its existence and application. The high value that senior people place upon this medicine and its instant recognisability is not apparently maintained among younger generations.
6.3.5 JIRRAMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Pterocaulon serrulatum, possibly also Pterocaulon sphacelatum and/or Pterocaulon glandulosum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Smelilif or smeligras, rarely jirrama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Flu, sinus congestion, sores. some claim further uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and drunk or used as a wash. Fresh leaves can be put straight into nostril and used as an inhalant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people, known to some or most adults and younger people. In current use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Not previously attested in published Marra documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General botanical and ethnobotanical references</td>
<td>Botanical: Brock (1988: 122)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pterocaulon serrulatum is endemic to Australia and geographically widespread. Its use as a medicine by a range of language groups has been noted in numerous publications (e.g. Barr et al. 1988; Bordulk et al. 2012; Latz 1995). Despite its prevalence, it is not particularly well documented in linguistic and ethnobotanical materials relating to Roper River languages. Jirrama was not documented in Heath’s Marra grammar (1981) nor is the species mentioned in any other grammar of Roper River languages produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Sharpe’s Alawa dictionary describes a medicinal plant, jurruy, assigning it inconsistently to two species: Pterocaulon glandulosum (2001a: 57) and Pterocaulon sphacelatum (ibid: 137). A recent ethnobiology publication on Mangarrayi lists jorroy – cognate with Alawa – assigning it to Pterocaulon serrulatum and P. sphacelatum (Roberts et al. 2011). It is apparent that these names refer to the same plant that Marra people call jirrama. Bradley (pers. comm.) indicates that the species is known to Yanyuwa people as jinkarr.

With specific reference to Marra people, it was first documented by Ginger Riley and Nganiyurlma Media Association in video recordings for the Bush Medicine From Ngukurr video (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990, see Appendix 4). It was also one of eight bush medicines specifically listed in Senior’s research into health beliefs and behaviour, carried out in Ngukurr between 1999 and 2001. Senior did not record an indigenous name for the species, listing it with two English-derived names, “smelly leaf plant” and
“bush tobacco” (2001: 43). The only other documentation relating to *jirrama* is a short text composed by Betty and Freda Roberts (2007, see Appendix 3). The applications of *jirrama* described by Marra informants correspond with existing documentation relating to other language groups; it is used primarily to treat cold, flus and sinus infection and can also be used as a wash to treat sores and skin infections. Descriptions of how to administer *jirrama* show some variation, with Betty Roberts unequivocally stating it can be brewed like tea and ingested, while Ginger Riley claimed that this application is limited (“you can drink ‘im little bit”). The medicinal qualities of *jirrama* purported by users in the Roper River region are supported by ethnopharmacological research into the species *Pterocaullon sphacelatum*, showing that it has antiviral properties that “inhibit the replication of rhinoviruses, the most frequent causative agent of the common cold” (Semple et al. 1999: 283) and inhibit the growth of poliovirus (Semple et al. 1998).

*Jirrama* is a very common plant, “found in all regions ... on a variety of soil and habitat types” (Barr et al. 1988: 184). Given its prevalence, it is interesting that the plant was not noted in some of the key linguistic descriptions stemming from the Roper River region. Betty Roberts who contributed extensively to this study champions the use and benefits of *jirrama*. In the spontaneously-taken photo shown in Figure 2–5, Betty can be seen to be incidentally carrying a few branches of the medicine in her left hand. It is clear that, for some at least, *jirrama* is recognised as a core, effective bush medicine yet it is not attested in Heath (1981).

Observational evidence suggests that despite *jirrama* being favoured by some senior elders, knowledge and use across all senior people is irregular. Correspondingly, young people demonstrate mixed levels of knowledge of the medicine. Half of the young people surveyed voluntarily identified it, but only by English-derived names: *smellif* ‘smelly leaf’ or *smeligras* ‘smelly grass’. Some recognised the name *jirrama* after hearing it. Three young people named it as the medicine they had used most recently, indicating its use and value is being partially maintained among Kriol speakers. However, half of the young people interviewed did not voluntarily identify this taxon as a bush medicine.
Section 6.3.6  

**DIRRINGGIRL-DIRRINGGIRL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th><em>Crinum angustifolium</em> (Senior 2001), <em>Crinum uniflorum</em> (Huddleston et al. n.d. (b)). See Brock (1988: 127–128)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>If known: <em>bush anyin</em> ‘bush onion’ or <em>wail anyin</em> ‘wild onion’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Sores, snake bites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Tuber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Not commonly known to adults and younger people, rarely or no longer used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>According to Senior (2001), plant is poisonous and not to be ingested. Cognate in Alawa and Warndarrang. In Nunggubuyu: <em>lhajbag</em>. Heath lists the plant as the species <em>Crinum asiaticum</em> but Sharpe (2001) queried this identification, presumably because that species is not attested in Australia. Latz (1995) discusses a different species, <em>Crinum flaccidum</em>, reporting very similar uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General botanical and ethnobotanical references**

- Central Australia ethnobotany: Latz (1995: 152) (*Crinum flaccidum*)

*Dirringgirl-dirringgirl* is not as well documented as other medicines discussed here. Although the plant name is noted in the Marra and Alawa dictionaries, medicinal properties are not mentioned, nor did it feature in the Betty and Freda Roberts’ bush medicine texts of the *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* video. It is, however, one of thirteen botanical medicines featured in the *Marra plants and their uses* guide (Huddleston et al. n.d. (b)), in which Betty and two of her sisters offer an English description:

> We use the bulb from this lily for medicine. We slice the bulb up and boil these slices. This medicine is good for treating sores and snake bites.

Senior includes it among eight medicines used in Ngukurr, listing the species as *Crinum angustifolium* and an additional note on its preparation that it is not to be ingested (2001: 42).

Despite documentation of the medicine being somewhat limited, there is sufficient evidence that Marra elders consider it part of their pharmacopeia: *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* is the subject of a text recorded in 2011 with Maureen Marranggulu Thompson.
(discussed in §7.1.1 and presented in Appendix 2) and a discussion in 2010 with a group of Marra elders indicated familiarity and knowledge with the plant, such as Fannie Gathawuy Numamurdi who states:

(6.6)  
\[
\text{nana nanggaya jaw-nimi, bal-imi, the[M] that[M] dig-2SG:do_this;FUT pound-2SG:do_this;FUT}
\]
\[
\text{buylim-nimi, lim-nijurra} \\
\text{boil-2SG:do_this;FUT bathe-2SG:go;FUT}
\]
You dig that one, you pound it, boil it and wash with it.

Gathawuy's description accords with that given in Brock's botanical guide (1988) which applies the following description of use and preparation to both \textit{Crinum angustifolium} and \textit{Crinum uniflorum}:

Preparation from crushed bulbs used as an antiseptic for wounds, sores and rectal abscesses. (\textit{ibid}: 127).

My observational evidence of the medicine is, however, very limited. I cannot recall any additional instances of the plant being talked about, sought after, collected, prepared or used. The only discussions I recall about the plant are the two recordings mentioned above which were both prompted by external stimuli. No L1 Kriol speakers indicated awareness of the plant. Anthony Daniels (aged mid-40s) assisted with transcribing recordings about the plant and was not familiar with the plant, despite usually being more knowledgeable about bush medicine than younger L1 Kriol speakers. It appears that knowledge of this medicine is not attested among Kriol speakers.
### 6.3.7 GUYIYA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Grewia retusifolia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Dogbul, guyiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Diarrhoea, also eye ailments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and drunk (to treat diarrhoea) or used as a wash (as in eyedrops, to treat eye ailments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Medicinal use known to senior people, not commonly known to adults and younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>More commonly known as a food source: fruit are eaten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| General botanical and ethnobotanical references | Botanical: Brock (1988: 210)  

*Grewia retusifolia* is a commonly occurring shrub and recognisable to most or all residents at Ngukurr because of its fruit, which are pleasant tasting and look distinctively like a miniature pair of dog’s testicles, hence its most common name among Kriol speakers: *dogbul* ‘dog ball(s)’. Its medicinal value however is less well-known, or even unknown, among young people. Even for Marra elders who are familiar with its medicinal value, its value as a food source appears to be more salient. In a short discussion with four L1 Marra speakers in 2010, during which they were presented with pictures of the plant, Freda Roberts extolled its fruit, initially in Kriol (underlined), before switching to Marra:

(6.7) FR:  

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{FR:} & \text{aa!} & \text{dijan} & \text{na} & \text{thet} & \text{taka}, & \text{nana} & \text{ninya} & \text{gayi} \\
\text{ah} & \text{this} & \text{EMPH} & \text{that} & \text{food} & \text{the[M]} & \text{this[M]} & \text{other} \\
\text{Oh, this is that food, the other one} \\
\text{jabay} & \text{ninya} & \text{na-} & \text{maybe} & \text{this[M]} & \text{[M]} & \text{this might be the-} \\
\text{[to others]} & \text{nana} & \text{guyiya} & \text{nawu-jinjiyinji?} & \text{the[M]} & \text{guyiya} & \text{1PLINCL-eat;PRS[REDUP]} & \text{do we eat guyiya?} \\
\end{array}
\]

HN:  \text{[yuuu!]}  

yes!  

FN:  \text{[aaaa]}  

bigombjeya & im & kuk  

ah & a \_lot & there & 3SG & ripe  

ah, there’s heaps of ripe ones there!
Medicinal properties of *guyiya* were not mentioned until I asked a leading question. Marra elders responded by briefly mentioning its medicinal use before Freda Roberts swiftly returned to food-based discussion:

(6.8) GD: *galimba medijin du*

and medicine too.

FD: *mm!= mm!*

FR: *=galimba medijin nana nanggaya*

and medicine the[M] that[M]

FN: *e-e ((gestures to eye))= hey! (points to own eye)*

HN: *=ba ai tu=* for eye too

for (treating) eyes too

FN: *=aidrop= eyedrops*

HN: *=aidrop= eyedrops*

FN: *=nbla, [daivarinya]*

and for diarrhoea

and for (treating) diarrhoea

FR: *ninya na, nana guyiya balngayi ai wana dagat*

this[M] EMPH the[M] guyiya I_wish 1SG want eat

This is it here (pointing to picture), *guyiya*, I wish I was eating it!

In addition to the above, *guyiya* featured in Betty and Freda’s bush medicine texts (see Appendix 3) but in their text they did not mention its medicinal properties, again focusing on it being a food source.

The documentary evidence of *Grewia reusifolia* being used medicinally is widespread, going back to at least 1903 (Barr et al. 1988: 138). Detailed notes on its preparation and use are provided in Barr et al. (1998), drawn from knowledge of Aboriginal informants across nine remote communities in the north of the Northern Territory. The authors also claim that the plant is “still widely used medicinally and considered effective” (ibid: 138).

Observational evidence indicates that *guyiya* is rarely in contemporary use in Ngukurr. I have not witnessed its collection, preparation or application, despite a number of senior people educating me on its medicinal value. Less than half of young people surveyed
indicated knowledge of *guyiya* as a bush medicine, despite most or all being familiar with the species and its edible fruit. The limited maintenance of knowledge displayed among young Kriol speakers is possibly attributable to its function as a treatment for diarrhoea, and so may be being maintained somewhat among young mothers to treat their children.

### 6.3.8 *Ngalangga*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th><em>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Coolibah, (river coolibah or River Red Gum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td><em>Ngalangga</em>, <em>waitbak tri</em> ‘white bark tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Sores, general sickness, flu/colds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people, known to some adults and younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General botanical and ethnobotanical references</td>
<td>Botanical: Brock (1988: 159)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ngalangga* appears to be one of the more commonly used and known bush medicines in contemporary Ngukurr although, oddly, it is not mentioned in any of the Marra-specific references consulted for this pharmacopeia. This is likely to be an accidental oversight given that *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* is "the most widely distributed eucalypt in Australia" (Brock 1988: 159) and is widely documented as a bush medicine (Barr et al. 1988; Brock 1988; Latz 1995). Additionally, Sharpe notes its medicinal properties in her Alawa dictionary (2001a).

Despite a lack of Marra-specific documentation about *ngalangga* as a medicine, it is apparent that Marra people knew about it and used it, especially given that a number of young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr are familiar with it. In the following quote a woman in her early 20s states that her fathers (i.e. own father and his brothers) – whose mother spoke Marra as a first language – teach her about it:

(6.9) *Oni mela sabi detmob bikos ebritaim mela sik, dedimo’ dali mela ba gaji warlan en det gulban en *ngalangga*, ngabi.*

We only know those ones (i.e. medicines) because whenever we are sick, dad and his brothers tell us to get *warlan* and *gulban* and *ngalangga*, don’t they.
In the above quote, the young woman is speaking to a close companion – a young mother in her mid-late 20s – who is one of the few young people I have observed gathering bush medicine. On a trip to a nearly billabong she collected *ngalangga* to treat her son’s boils, doing so in the same nonchalant, confident manner with which senior people collect bush medicine during daytrips we have gone on together. These observations correspond with other interviews carried out with young Kriol speakers. *Ngalangga* is a salient bush medicine to many of them, some of them recalling and discussing it before any other taxa, as in (6.10):

\[(6.10)\]  
1. **EN:** *ngalangga yu yusum ba tutheik gin*  
   ngalangga 2SG use:TR for toothache as well  
   you use *ngalangga* for toothache as well  
2. **EN:** *en wen yu abu det nogudwan hedeik*  
   and when 2SG have:TR the bad headache  
   and when you have migraines  
3. **EN:** *en, en im gudwan ba dai- daiaebetik*  
   and and 3SG good for diabetic  
   and, and it’s good for diabetic  
4. **PD:** *so*  
   sores  
5. **EN:** *so*  
   sores  
6. **PD:** *good for cold, [flu thing]*  
7. **EN:** *mm ba flu du*  
   mm, for flu too  

In summary, there is clear evidence that knowledge and use of *ngalangga* is being maintained to a significant degree among young L1 Kriol speakers. This is despite the medicine not being particularly well documented in reference materials specific to the region.
6.3.9 Mudju

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Scientific name</strong></th>
<th><em>Eucalyptus microtheca</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common English name</strong></td>
<td>Coolibah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Kriol name</strong></td>
<td><em>Mudju</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use/treatment</strong></td>
<td>Toothache, also sores/skin complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant part used</strong></td>
<td>Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of preparation</strong></td>
<td>Boiled and gargled or used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</strong></td>
<td>Known to senior people, not commonly known to adults and younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General botanical and ethnobotanical references</strong></td>
<td>NT ethnobotany: Isaacs (1987: 235)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mudju* (*Eucalyptus microtheca*) is the second eucalypt species discussed here that is used medicinally by Marra people. Unlike *ngalangga* (discussed above), there is richer Marra-oriented documentation on the medicinal use of *mudju*. Its core reported use is to treat toothache, but secondary uses as a wash to treat sores and skin conditions are also well attested. *Mudju* is discussed in all three locally-produced sources consulted in this study, for example Betty and Freda Roberts (2007) mention that:

(6.11) Nana nyardin-gugi yumarr nana ninyayana mudju,
      nya-lib-manjarr-i.
      The skin of this type, *mudju*, is good for bathing (with).

On video, the collection and application of *mudju* is demonstrated by Alawa elders Willie Gudabi and Barney Ellaga. Barney introduces the medicine, mentioning its two main applications as follows:

(6.12) Rili thei bin oldei gedim bla bogi du diskain, dis kuliba bak. Bat natha ting wen thei bin oldei abu det so wat aibin gedim na- ai bin gedi tutheik: ol dislot iya [points to mouth]. Ai bin traiyim munanga medisin, ai bin traiyim ngalangga, det waitgam tri, bat ‘e kudun kilim. ... ai bin boilm diskain en ai bin kilim ol det tutheik wat ai bin abum iya insaid, dijan [points], dijan [points]. Im kil all the germ inside. ... im rili gud medisin. Im wandei medisin dijan, tu gedim fiks, tutheik.

Actually, they would always get this kind for washing (skin) with. But another thing when they would have the sores that I got – I got a toothache, all over here [points to mouth]. I tried Western medicine, I tried *ngalangga* – that white gum tree, but it couldn’t kill (the pain). I boiled this type and I stopped all the toothache that I had inside, here [points] (and) here [points]. It kills all the germs
inside... It’s really good medicine. It’s “one-day medicine”, to get toothache fixed up.

Among young Kriol speakers, *mudju* is not widely known, or not known at all, for its medicinal properties. Anthony Daniels (mid 40s) identified it as a good wood for making artefacts (e.g. fighting sticks) and as excellent slow-burning firewood but not as a medicine. Younger speakers recognised the name as a type of tree but could not confidently describe specific uses. This matches my observational evidence: I am not aware of anyone using *mudju* medicinally in the time I have lived and worked in Ngukurr.

### 6.3.10 Warlan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th><em>Eucalyptus tectifica</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Coolibah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td><em>warlan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Toothache, headache, internal complaints, general application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and gargled or drunk or used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people and to many adults and younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>The bark is also used by some senior women who mix the fine ash it produces with tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General botanical and ethnobotanical references</td>
<td>Botanical: Brock (1988: 181)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Warlan* (*Eucalyptus tectifica*) is a Eucalypt species considered by senior people at Ngukurr to be similar to *mudju* (*Eucalyptus microtheca*, see above). Alawa elder Willie Gudabi explicitly constrained *warlan* with *mudju* while discussing the latter on video (in Alawa). By differentiating their habitats, Gudabi implies that the two taxa are related and potentially confused:

(6.13) *ninda nda warr-ngulenu mudju*

this CNJ call-1PLEXCL>3SG;PRS tree_sp.

*warlan nda nulu benda*

tree_sp. CNJ that[M] up

We call this *mudju*. *Warlan* is that one (growing) higher (i.e. on hills).
Both warlan and mudju (discussed above) are used medicinally. Roberts and Roberts (2007) wrote briefly about the preparation and application of warlan:

(6.14) Nyardin-gugi gurl-awuyana ninyayana guyurru-ni
skin-3SG;POSS drink-1PLINCL:(-jinji);FUT this_kind tooth-PURP
guda ngaba ngarirlii gurlarl-awujula yawurr-yawurr
that's_all and headache wash-1PLINCL:(-jujunyi?):??: afternoon
ngaba mingandadayai ngarndal-nigi warnnggu yumarr-nigi
and morning mouth-2SG;POSS until good-2SG;POSS
gana guyurru-nigi
REL tooth-2SG;POSS
We drink the (prepared) bark of this for tooth(ache), that’s all. And headache. We wash (with it) in the afternoons and mornings. (In) your mouth (i.e. mouthwash) until your teeth are good.

Interestingly, Betty Roberts (one of the authors of the above text) and her sisters Gertie and Angelina did not mention medicinal uses of warlan in the short guide to Marra plants and their uses (Huddleston et al. n.d. (c)), nor are medicinal properties mentioned in relation to Mangarrayi uses of the species (Roberts et al. 2011). In fact, published evidence of medicinal use of Eucalyptus tectifica is scarce. Only two instances of its use are attested among sources stemming from the wider region: its use is attested among Yolŋu who drink an infusion of the bark to treat digestive complaints and use it externally for cuts and sores (Scarlett, White and Reid 1982: 177) and the Dalabon ethnobiology book reports that bark is prepared to treat diarrhoea (Bordulk et al. 2012).

Despite a lack of published information on the medicinal use of this species, knowledge appears to be persisting to some degree among Kriol speaking young adults in Ngukurr. It was the first medicine mentioned by the youngest person interviewed when asked to list all medicines known to her. She went on to discuss some of its applications:

(6.15) Det warlan im ba eni disis, ee. Laik if yu abu kensa, nogudwan kidni, daiyabedik bala, im kyuwa det ting. O, if yu wandi kwit smoking…

Warlan is for any disease, isn’t it. Like, if you have cancer, bad kidneys, (if you’re) a diabetic, it cures that thing. Or, if you want to quit smoking…

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrahNGUgd02a_00:19:39]

And when I asked what part of the tree is used, she also demonstrated sound knowledge of its preparation:
(6.16) *Det bak, en mela skini det waitwan pat en boili. Wen yu boili im redwan. Laik ti ee. Bat bitawan*

The bark, and we skin the white part and boil it. When you boil it, it (becomes) red. Like tea, hey. But bitter.

[AH_20110906KRIOLdrgANGlud02a_00:20:07]

*Warlan* was also recognised as a medicine by two young men in their mid-20s who could otherwise name only one bush medicine type. In the interview, the two men were asked only if they recognised the lexeme *warlan* (i.e. not in reference to bush medicine). Both did and one responded with:

(6.17) *Mela yusu ba ting than, ei, medisin. laik ... if yu garra nogudwan ches o enijing insaid.*

We used if for whats-it, hey... medicine. Like... if you have a bad chest or anything (bad) inside (i.e. internal sickness/pain).

[KM_20120308KRIOLdrgmNGUgd01a_00:30:50]

However, the men did not accurately describe its preparation, stating that it was the leaves that were used in preparing the medicine rather than the bark as stated in all other documentation. Nevertheless, the evidence suggested above indicates that knowledge of the medicinal use of *warlan* is persisting somewhat among younger generations in Ngukurr. Interestingly, this does not accord with the low level of published documentation available that would suggest spasmodic medicinal use of the species.
6.3.11 Mayarranja

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Ficus opposita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>None in common use, but called 'sandpaper fig' by Kriol speakers when speaking English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td>Mayarranja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Used as a wash to treat skin complaints (sores, infections etc.) or drunk to treat diarrhoea, headache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash or drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (Ngukurr)</td>
<td>Known to senior people and to some adults and younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>This plant is more widely known for as a food source, for its seasonal fruit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to yurrmuru and guyiya, mayarranja (Ficus opposita) is a tree well-known to all adults in Ngukurr but primarily known for its fruit. Its medicinal value is also widely attested, at least among senior residents and Marra speakers. The leaves are boiled until the liquid turns red and used as an antiseptic wash to treat skin complaints, as described by Huddleston, Roberts and George:

We also use the leaves from this tree to make a medicine. We boil the leaves. Then we “bogey” (wash) with the water. It cleans your skin and it is very refreshing. (Huddleston et al. n.d. (b))

While more detailed description of the medicinal use of Ficus opposita is given in Barr et al. (1988: 132–133), Roberts and Roberts’ (2007) written text summarises mayarranja’s uses as both a food source and medicine:

(6.18) Niwi-jinjiyinjini nana nanggayana yumarr nyarrbanyarrba 1PLEXCL-eat;PUT[REDUP] the[M] that_kind good sweet 
Nana rimbirr-wugi yumarr nya-lib-manjarr-i ngaba 
the[M] leaf-3SG;POSS good N[OBL]-bathe-NMLZ-PURP and 
nya-gurl-manjarr-i, gurl-gurl-niwijurliyi na-gurlugal-ni 
N[OBL]-drink-NMLZ-PURP drink-drink-1PLEXCL:(-jyunyi);PRS M-headcold-PURP

We eat this type, it’s nice and sweet. The leaves are good for bathing (with) and for drinking, we drink it for headaches.

More recently, Fannie Gathawuy Numamurdirdi mentioned both medicinal applications (drinking and bathing) in a 2010 recording:
Among young L1 Kriol speakers, there is evidence that knowledge of *mayarranja* as a bush medicine is persisting among a sizeable proportion of the demographic. In an interview with two women in their 20s, they could describe the plant and its medicinal use but could not recall the name (lines 1–2). After I provided the name, they recognised it (lines 17–19).
Note also that their approval and knowledge of the medicine extends to an instruction encouraging me to become a user (lines 36–39):

32 DR:  *yu oldei boili du than?*
  do you boil it too?
33 GD:  *nomo, ai jis sabi det tri thasol*
  no I just know the tree, that’s all.
34 DR:  *nomo, laig yu oldei breigi det lif? en yu garra boilim*
  no like, do you strip the leaves off it? and you’ll boil it up
35 GD:  *ngi?*
  do you?
36 DR:  *yu gin boilim!*
  you can boil it up!
37 DR:  *if yu garri bedkol, yu gin boili du than ee*
  if you have sinus buildup, you boil that too can’t you.
38 GD:  *laik dumbuyumbu*
  like dumbuyumbu
39 DR:  *yu sabi ba nekstaim*
  you know for next time

Anthony Daniels reported that he uses *mayarranja* and described its preparation in detail:

(6.21)  *Wen mi ardi binji o wen mi abu daiyariya, mi dringgi then. ...*

```
Yu boilim im. En det lif im garra gu redwan. If im still gu- if im yelouwan, if det, ting
im yelouwan la', im stil ting, than – Im stil rowan. ... Im garra luk laigi ti, baba. Im
garra luk laik ti, det *mayarranja*. that's when im taim ba dringk.

...Wen ai oldei luk im det nyuwan lif, wen im gamat nyuwan laithad, ril nyu, thas
tha nyuwan na mi gajim. En, maidi kapula thet ol lif ail gaji. Then ai libu na. Wen
im- wen mi boilim en det wada im gudan na bilima mo wada. Meigim gubek
seimwei til im, kala tjeinj.
```

When I have a stomach ache or when I have diarrhoea, then I drink it.

You boil it. And the leaf has to turn red. If it still goes – it’s yellow, if that thing is
yellow like so, it’s still what’s-it – it’s still raw. It has to look like tea, brother. It has
to look like tea, that *mayarranja*. That’s when it’s time to drink it.

... Whenever I see new leaves, when it grows new (leaves) like so, really new,
that’s the new leaves that I get. And, maybe a couple of the old leaves I’ll get. Then
I leave it (i.e. the tree). When it– when I boil it and the water level drops, (I) fill it
up with more water. Reduce it again it the same way until the colour changes.
Evidence gathered demonstrates that knowledge of *mayarranja* as both a medicine and food source is being maintained among a number of younger adults. This is in contrast to other medicinal plants that double as food sources like *guyiya* and *yurrmurru* but are now known to younger generations mostly or exclusively for their fruit.

### 6.3.12 BARNARR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Owenia vernicosa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common English name</td>
<td>Marble tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kriol name</td>
<td><em>Barnarr, mabultri</em> (if known)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use/treatment</td>
<td>Used as an antiseptic wash or applied to eyes to treat eye complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant part used</td>
<td>Bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of preparation</td>
<td>Boiled and used as a wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary use (<a href="#">Ngukurr</a>)</td>
<td>Known to senior people but to few adults and younger people. Now rarely used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Marra documentation and other sources (e.g. Isaacs 1987) say it can be drunk. Barr, Chapman et al. claim it should not be taken internally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| General botanical and ethnobotanical references | Botanical: Brock (1988: 272)  
**NT ethnobotany:** Barr et al. (1988: 168–169), Isaacs (1987: 238) |

*Barnarr* is a widely attested bush medicine and its use is attested among Marra people. Huddleston, Roberts and George describe it in some detail:

> We use it for medicine. We scrape off the outside bark and wash the wood. Then we scrape shavings of the wood into water and boil it. It is a good medicine for eyes: We wash our eyes with this medicine if they are sore. We can drink this medicine too, if we are sick inside, such as with lung or liver problems.  
>(Huddleston et al. n.d. (c))

The medicinal use of the species is also mentioned for Alawa people (Sharpe 2001a: 134) and described in further detail by Brock (1988: 272) and Barr et al. (1988: 168–169). As with *dumbuyumba* and *burduga*, the Marra name of the species is cognate with a significant number of neighbouring and regional languages (including Bininj Gunwok, Jawoyn and Dalabon). Yet this does not seem to be sufficient for the lexeme, *barnarr*, to be salient among L1 Kriol speakers. Like *burduga*, knowledge of the name *barnarr* and medicinal use of the tree appears to have dissipated among young Kriol speaking adults in Ngukurr. Kriol speakers who know of the tree are likely to refer to it by its anglicised name, *mabultri* ‘marble tree’. Few L1 Kriol speakers aged under 40 demonstrated
awareness of this medicine, with few appearing to use it, although a middle-aged Kriol speaker reported that he uses it and described its preparation in some detail:

(6.22) AD: *Im bla sowa, o bla jinggi irriwul o ...*  
3SG for so or for infected ears or  
It's for (treating) sores, or for ear infections or...  
GD: *Wani yu yusi det lif o bak...?*  
what 2SG use:TR the leaf or bark  
What do you use, the leaf or bark...?  
AD: *Lif en det wanim insaid pat en det bak pat.*  
leaf and the whats-it-inside part and the bark part  
Yu skrei pi det wadi mob, en yu bilima  
2SG scrape:TR the stick COLL and 2SG fill:TR:up  
la... biliken en yu larrim im boil en im gu...  
LOC billycan and 2SG let:TR 3SG boil and 3SG go  
redwanim gu, kala  
red 3SG go colour  
The leaf and the whats-it, inside part and the bark. You scrape the wood (i.e. scrape off the bark) and you fill it up into a... billycan and you let it boil and it goes... it goes red in colour.

Despite Anthony's description and reported maintained use, younger adults do not appear to be continuing to use barnarr for medicinal purposes nor to be maintaining specific knowledge about medicinal applications of the tree.

6.3.13 Other Attested Medicines

The remaining medicines presented in this first pharmacopeia of Marra bush medicine have less information available than those discussed above, hence discussion of each medicine is briefer.

**Bunarlarla** (*Capparis umbonata*) is more commonly referred to in Kriol by those who are familiar with it by an alternative name: *gayabam.* Its medicinal use is noted not by Marra speakers but in other sources, which state that bark and leaves can be boiled and used as a wash to treat skin complaints, provide general pain relief (Barr et al. 1988: 75) or “drunk to treat sore throat, diarrhoea and stomach pains” (Brock 1988: 114). The species is better known for its fruit as indicated by the English name that Aboriginal people apply, *bush orange*. Roberts and Roberts (2007) composed a short text on the species (see Appendix 3, text 10) but did not mention medicinal aspects. Anthony Daniels

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90 The source language of the Kriol term, *gayabam* is likely to be Ngala’gan (Merlan 1983).
(aged mid 40s) is the youngest person to have mentioned *gayabam* during ethnobotanical interviews and, although he claimed that most people in Ngukurr knew the word, there is evidence suggesting that many younger Kriol speaking adults are unfamiliar with the species. This puts *bunarlarla* (*gayabam*) in a group with *yurrumuru* and *guyiya*: medicinal species that are now known primarily or solely for their seasonal fruit.

*Mandarlurra* (*Eucalyptus leucophloia*) is known in English as 'snappy gum'. Marra elders Huddlestone, Roberts and George reported that:

> We use the bark from this tree for medicine too. We boil it up and wash or soak in it. It is very good for the skin and helps heal sores and ring worm. (Huddlestone et al. n.d. (a)).

Medicinal uses of *Eucalyptus leucophloia* are also noted for Central Australian communities, with similar applications as described above:

> A decoction of the bright yellow inner portion of the bark is used as a medicinal wash for most ailments. (Latz 1995: 188).

Sharpe also noted medicinal uses among Alawa people (2001a: 125). Contemporary observational evidence at Ngukurr is that while the tree is still known to senior people, it is no longer used medicinally. Accordingly, younger people who speak only Kriol do not demonstrate awareness of the use of this species as a medicine.

*Garnaya* refers only to a specific plant part and cannot refer to an entire plant as is the case for all medicines described above. *Garnaya* is the most common name used in Kriol to refer to the root or bulb of *Nymphaea violacea* or 'water lily' and the word's language of origin is Marra. This appears to be a unique aspect of botanical nomenclature in Marra and other languages of the region: that each significant part of *Nymphaea violacea* has its own monomorphemic name. The other major named parts are valuable food sources named *yarlbun* (seeds/seed head) and *jawjaw* (stalk) in Marra. All three names are also common terms used in Kriol to refer to these plant parts.

*Garnaya* is not a prototypical bush medicine. It is also a common food source, but unlike other bush medicine taxa that are used as both food and medicine, *garnaya* has no medicine-specific preparation. It is simply consumed as a conventional food source, eaten raw or roasted in hot coals and it is eaten regardless of whether its medicinal properties are sought after by the consumer. Yet it is recognised as a food that is good for digestion and can prevent and/or treat diarrhoea, as noted by Sharpe in reference to
Alawa people (2001a: 132). The somewhat peripheral status of garnaya in the domain of bush medicine perhaps explains why it was not mentioned specifically in existing Marra-specific documentation of bush medicine consulted in this study. Garnaya is known to all adult Kriol speakers as a food source, even though there is evidence that its consumption is becoming less frequent (as Dwayne Rogers (mid 20s) exclaimed, oo longtaim mela bin laigi garnaya 'oh, a long time ago we liked/enjoyed garnaya'). Young Kriol speakers interviewed in this study identified and recognised garnaya as a food source but did not generally recognise its medicinal properties.

Similarly to garnaya, jalma (Dioscorea sp.) is a general food source that may be considered by some to bring health benefits beyond its implicit nutritional value. Jalma is a type of yam that requires soaking to remove its bitter taste prior to consumption. It is reported as being a common food source in pre-contact times but its consumption has declined (e.g. Heath 1980b: 437). Medicinal uses are not well attested in the literature; however, jalma was included in the Bush Medicine from Ngukurr video, featuring Ritharrŋu man Charlie Munur demonstrating its collection and preparation. Speaking about jalma, Charlie stated:

(6.23) Dis rili bla... people who are... abum so en thei garri det hat problem
This is really for... people who are... have sores and they have heart problems

Later, Charlie mentions that:

(6.24) Im gud for ebri... yuno laik ebri joint, ebri boun. Im gud fud diskain.
It's good for every... you know like every joint (and) every bone. This type is good food.

Based on Charlie Munur’s description and lack of other documentation, jalma’s status as a bush medicine appears to be quite peripheral. In contemporary Ngukurr, observational evidence suggests that jalma is rarely, if ever, collected, prepared and eaten. L1 Kriol speakers aged under 40 appear to be almost entirely unfamiliar with jalma.

Gariri and mijirr were both noted in Heath's Marra dictionary as "a small shrub used for medicine" (1981: 453, 473) but with little additional information. No species name or further information was given, apart from a note that only one of the two main informants Heath spoke to recognised the term gariri. Noting that these two taxa are medicinal is somewhat anomalous as Heath did not mention medicinal uses for any of the
other Marra taxa mentioned in this pharmacopeia, although he did include other features of such taxa including whether they are food sources or used for making weapons or tools. It may be that Heath noted that these two taxa are medicinal because, unlike most other botanical taxa, he had no further descriptive or ethnobotanical information to offer.

**Jarnynin** (*Corymbia sp. (polycarpa?)) is a large bloodwood tree that is known to have multiple uses, including having a sap or gum that can be eaten or used as an adhesive and wood that can be used for a number of tools and implements. Medicinal properties have also been noted: Scarlett, White, and Reid reported that Yolŋu people dissolved the tree’s gum in water and “painted on ulcers and yaws” (1982: 176). A similar medicinal use was demonstrated by Yolŋu elder of the Wägilak clan, Sambo Barra Barra, in the Bush Medicine from Ngukurr video (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990) in which he demonstrates placing fresh sap over an open wound or sore. This medicinal use was not familiar to the last remaining Marra speakers:

\[(6.25) \quad 1 \quad \text{FR:} \quad \text{Yumarr nya-na-me-nana medisin? Marluy?} \]
\[\quad \text{good N[OBL] the[M] medicine nothing} \]
\[\quad \text{Is it good- (is) this medicine or no?} \]
\[\quad 2 \quad \text{FN:} \quad \text{[marluy wirrju nana nanggaya]} \]
\[\quad \text{nothing bad the[M] that[M]} \]
\[\quad \text{No, that’s no good.} \]
\[\quad 3 \quad \text{HN:} \quad \text{[Marluy.}] \]
\[\quad \text{No.} \]

Despite this, it could be speculated that medicinal applications were known to previous generations of Marra people. The few L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr who know this species know it only as *bladwud* (bloodwood) and do not associate it with any medicinal properties.

**Guyany** (*Excoecaria parvifolia*) is now known to those at Ngukurr who are familiar with it as *karrapas or karrapastri*. In English it is known most commonly as Gutta Percha tree. The last speakers of Marra struggle to or cannot recall the Marra name of the tree (*guyany*) despite it being instantly recognisable to them. The diminished ability to name the tree in Marra corresponds with a lack of contemporary knowledge about its medicinal properties. These properties were documented by Barr et al., who describe processes of boiling the bark and using the decoction as an external wash to treat skin complaints, swelling and general pain relief (1988: 131). Sharpe reports that Alawa people used this species in the same way (2001a: 136) and also call it *guyany*. Two Alawa
elders, Barney Ellaga and Willie Gudabi, describe and demonstrate the medicinal use of guyany in *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). In addition to the documented uses given above, they also mention that it had been used to treat leprosy. But the knowledge the two men share on video appears to not have been retained, even among senior people in Ngukurr today.91 It can be assumed that if senior people demonstrate diminished knowledge of the name and use of the species then young L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr would not be aware of the medicinal use of this species either and this appears to be true. The only aspect of knowledge that has been maintained to some degree is the knowledge that the sap of the tree should not come into contact with eyes as it can cause irritation and, reportedly, blindness. It should also be noted that medicinal use of *Excoecaria parvifolia* may not have extended to the Roper River and/or coastal regions. The language groups named by Willie Gudabi on video as medicinal users of this species are groups to the south and south-west: *yunmi Alawa bin using it, en Ngarnji pipul en Jingulu pipul* 'us Alawa (people) were using it, and Ngarnka/Ngarnji people and Jingulu people'. This corresponds with locations that informed the study by Barr et al. They gathered medicinal information from places near Jingulu and Ngarnka/Ngarnji country, as well as further to the west, around Timber Creek (1988: 131). Note also, Gudabi’s use of the past tense (*Alawa bin using it...*) suggesting its medicinal use had subsided by the 1980s.

The tree that Heath lists as *dugurlurlan* appears to be the plant that Roberts and Roberts included in their bush medicine texts that they named *dugul*, describing it in Marra as *yumarr nya-lib-manjarrri* ‘good for bathing (with)’. This tree is the bush medicine that is perhaps most familiar to non-Indigenous people; it is known as *soap tree* in English, and is quite distinctive because of the soapy lather that can be produced when its foliage is mixed with water. In Kriol, it is also best known as *souptri*.

*Dugurlurlan/dugul* appears to be the species *Acacia holosericea* (Heath 1981: 448). Yet in the anonymously compiled pictorial books on Marra plants and their uses, the species *Acacia holosericea* was assigned a different Marra plant name, *murdirdi* rather than *dugul* or *dugurlurlan* (Huddleston et al. n.d. (b)). Heath had assigned *murdirdi* to “wattles

91 Unlike most other segments of this video that are entitled with each medicine’s Indigenous name, this segment is entitled ‘Carapas’ despite the two elders referring to it as *guyany* several times during both the English and Alawa parts of the video. Naming the segment ‘carapas’ suggests that at the time its traditional name was known to few. This corresponds with the remaining Marra speakers to a large extent forgetting the name of the species.
such as *Acacia conspersa* and *Acacia torulosa*" (1981: 474). The confused identification is further muddied by Marra elders ambiguously saying that:

> There is more than one kind of murdirdi tree – this is just one of them. (Huddleston et al. n.d. (b))

It is unclear whether *murdirdi* and *dugul/dugurluran* are synonymous in Marra or refer to identifiably different tree types and I have not been able to clarify which species are covered by the Marra names. Regardless of the categorisation and identification, the medicinal properties are clear: *Acacia holosericea* is described in Barr et al. as widely used to treat sores, skin allergies and rashes and as a mild antiseptic. They also report that such uses apply to related *Acacia* species such as *auriculiformis* and *pellita* (1988: 39). (This further supports the likelihood that *dugul/dugurluran* and/or *murdirdi* refer to multiple *Acacia* species).

This type of medicine is rarely if ever used in contemporary Ngukurr. Given that its medicinal properties are quite generic, it appears as though its use has been supplanted by commercial soap products. Knowledge of *souptri* "soap tree" does persist however, including among many young people, attributable to the novelty of being able to quickly create a recognisably soap-like product from a commonly occurring tree.

Types of native honey such as *Gawurrwa* and *Garnamurru* are seen by some as bush medicine. *Garnamurru* is a type of native honey described in Kriol as *boi shugabeg* ‘male sugarbag’, in reference to the phallic shape of the entrance tunnel of the hive. The term *garnamurru* simulatenously refers to this type of hive and the food sourced from it (honey and eggs). Heath defined *garnamurru* as the “‘long-nosed’ honey bee, *Trigona sp.*” (1981: 451), but based on information provided by Marra speakers, this appears to be incorrect. Marra speakers appear to categorise *shugabeg* (“sugarbag” or native honey, known in Marra under the hypernym *ngulawarr*), not according to characteristics of the bees but of the hives. Accordingly, *gawurrwa* refers to ‘ground sugarbag’ – native beehives that are built in the ground – usually in rocky areas where the nests occur in comparatively loose soil nestled against or between large rocks and boulders. All types of native honey or, in Kriol, *shugabeg*, are prized food sources, well-known for having a sweet and delicious taste. Health properties are less salient and as such, sugarbag types such as *garnamurru* and *gawurrwa* are not prototypical bush medicines, despite them

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92 Indeed, in Marra nomenclature native bees are not distinguished from ordinary flies, with both types of insect referred to as *gurndil*. 
(and other native honeys) considered as benefitting digestion and possessing other medicinal properties. The only documented attestation of garnamurru and gawurrwa having medicinal properties is in the texts composed by Betty and Freda Roberts (2007):

(6.26) Yumarr nana ninya garnamurru na-ngundulngundul-ni
good the[M] this[M] bee_sp. M[OBL]-throat-PURP
Garnamurru is good for your throat.

Writing about gawurrwa, they state:

(6.27) Nyarrbanyarrba bindi yumarr na-nganja-ni,
sweet properly good M[OBL]-belly-PURP
It’s very sweet and good for (the) belly/stomach (i.e. digestion).

Observational evidence suggests a consensus among people familiar with procuring and eating native honey that it is indeed beneficial for digestion and general health beyond its nutritional value. This applies in particular to the yellow egg-laden parts of the hive known as ngarlbu. Ngukurr residents rarely obtain and consume garnamurru and other native honey types these days. This is likely to be attributable to the difficulty and amount of time required to source and extract the honey. Additionally, introduced bee species have replaced native bee populations to some extent. Nevertheless, most young people have encountered and consumed shugabeg and value it as a food source.

*Cymbopogon procerus* is a grass species with well attested medicinal uses, yet it has no documented Marra name. It is most commonly referred to as *lemon grass* in English by Aboriginal people. In *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990), it was demonstrated by Ngandi elder Sam Thompson, assisted by Marra elder Betty Roberts. The video segment was labelled ‘Smelly Grass’ and Thompson stated that he knew no Ngandi name for the species which is consistent with Marra. The grass is crushed, boiled and used as a wash to treat a variety of ailments including fevers and skin conditions. According to Latz (1995: 156), it is also sometimes ingested. Some senior people in Ngukurr are familiar with the medicinal use of this species and I have observed it being collected on occasion. There is little observational evidence to suggest that it is known and used by younger people. Some Kriol speakers do use the name *smeligras* ‘smelly grass’ but in reference to *jirrama* (*Pterocauleon serrulatum*) rather than this species. Although the use of *Cymbopogon procerus* appears to be diminishing, it is interesting to note that a bush medicine that has no Indigenous name is well-known to recent generations of elders. This suggests that the continuation of knowledge of particular medicines is not necessarily reliant on it being a named taxon.
Another medicine with no known name in local languages was also demonstrated by Sam Thompson on *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). The video segment was labelled *Cassia* and Thompson does not provide a name in Ngandi, Kriol or English for the species, which is likely to be *Senna leptocladada*, also known as *Cassia leptocladada*. As with the "Smelly grass" segment, Thompson is again assisted by Betty Roberts and they describe using the plant to treat skin conditions such as scabies and ringworm, or as Thompson puts it, *fo itji* ‘for itchy(ness)’. He demonstrates removing leaves (“thick bushes”) and rubbing them directly onto the skin. Medicinal use of *Cassia leptocladada* was mentioned in Brock (1988: 116) with a similar use noted (“to treat sores”) but the stated preparation was infusion rather than direct application of crushed leaves. The assistance that Betty Roberts provided Sam Thompson during that segment indicates clearly that she was familiar with the medicine; however, no Marra name is attested for the species either. Given that the habitat described by Brock is “endemic to the sandstone escarpment region of the Top End” (*ibid*.: 116) it may not be endemic to Marra country, but instead be more familiar to people like Thompson whose (Ngandi) country matches the habitat Brock describes for the species. There is no observational evidence that the plant is still used medicinally in Ngukurr today, nor that young people have knowledge of the plant’s reported medicinal value.

### 6.3.14 Peripheral bush medicine taxa

It has already been mentioned that some of the examples of bush medicine taxa are those that are conventional food sources but considered to have medicinal properties beyond their nutritional value. Examples mentioned above are *garnaya* and native honey types, which are recognised as being good for digestion. Two more of these peripheral examples are mentioned here: fresh water and fresh fish. While fish and water would be considered peripheral to what people in Ngukurr consider to be bush medicine, there is documentary and observational evidence that at least some people in Ngukurr consider these to have healing or medicinal properties.

Homes in Ngukurr community are supplied with treated bore water, which carries an unpleasant taste. All local residents prefer the taste of fresh water found in running creeks, rivers and billabongs. On day trips, stops are often made at suitable river crossings to fill water bottles for immediate consumption and those with the means to do so travel to nearby water systems specifically to collect several litres of drinking water to take back to their homes in the community. For sick and infirm people, obtaining fresh drinking water is not just gustatory but is considered to aid recovery or ameliorate symptoms of illness and disease. A senior man who is part of a family that I work closely
with in Ngukurr battled cancer throughout a significant period of this study. Family members regularly requested that I take them to nearby water sources so they could collect several litres of drinking water, primarily because they felt it would bring health benefits to the cancer patient. A similar sentiment was expressed by senior health worker Alex Thompson in reference to fresh fish, when he was interviewed for the *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* video. He articulated that Marra people would provide children with fish as a means of improving health:

> Some medicine come from animal, bush medicine.... a sick baby, my father might just get fish, and I believe fish is something that- it's good for children, to make children healthy and people used to use that as bush medicine. Feed that baby, not for just to make him grow but when there's something wrong with him you know? Just to get him back like when im go skinny. Skinny kid. Like losing weight, bad diarrhoea, they- Marra people used to use fish, eat more fish then, then have to get that baby back into health again. So we believe that's part of our medicine.

[AT_BushMedicineFromNgukurr_01:09:04]

### 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on bush medicine as a representative domain within ethnobiology and a domain representing an area in which there is strong evidence of diminished knowledge across the language shift occurring from Marra to Kriol. The chapter offers a first pharmacopeia of bush medicine as used by Marra people, encompassing twenty-six taxa, twelve of which are discussed in detail. Less attention was given to describing in detail the preparation and uses of each medicine as these are generally described elsewhere, as referenced throughout the chapter. Instead, careful attention was paid in contrasting the documented knowledge and use of each taxon among Marra speaking people and among young L1 Kriol speaking adults (aged generally between 20 and 45). It was once claimed that “the first aspect of primitive culture to be lost is knowledge of the use of plants as medicine” (Farnsworth 1966 in Webb 1969) and initial observations of bush medicine practices in Ngukurr can sometimes give this impression, as claimed by research into health practices in Ngukurr in the early 2000s, which found “little evidence that people were currently using bush medicines on a regular basis” (Senior 2003: 115).

The evidence presented in this chapter paints a more complex picture. Observational evidence finds that a number of senior people still use bush medicine regularly and that a number of younger adults are known users of a small number of bush medicines. In terms of knowledge of bush medicines (rather than actual use), one taxon, *dumbuyumbu* was well known to all surveyed, regardless of age and knowledge of traditional language. A number of other taxa were known to some or most young adults but not all. Some L1
Kriol speakers under 40 could describe the preparation and application of selected taxa with some confidence and detail while others of similar age could not. Examples of such taxa are *gulban, yurrmuru, ngalangga* and *warlan*.

Considering the contrast group, senior people and Marra speakers exhibit a significantly greater knowledge of a greater number of bush medicine taxa. They prepare bush medicine more frequently than younger people and probably use it more often; however, senior people also often procure it in order to supply it to younger people, either upon request or under their own volition. It is also important to note that when information provided during this study was contrasted with information documented in previous decades, senior people and Marra speakers occasionally appeared to demonstrate diminished knowledge of certain taxa. This indicates that, at least for some taxa, loss and dissipation of knowledge can occur prior to language shift. An example of such a taxon is *guyany* which was described in detail by Alawa elders in the 1990s but appears to be unknown as a medicinal plant to contemporary elders. Other taxa constitute examples of knowledge ‘shift’, where previously well-attested and highly regarded medicines have recently become more peripheral, generally because the plant has become better known for alternative uses – usually as a food source. Examples of taxa in this category are *guyiya* and *yurrmuru*.

The chapter that follows continues the theme of bush medicine, building upon qualitative data presented in this chapter to provide further analyses, using discourse analysis and quantitative analysis, to investigate the maintenance and/or loss of knowledge of bush medicine knowledge and patterns of usage. The sub-domain of lizards is also examined in a similar way to indicate whether the findings pertaining to bush medicine would be replicated in other biological sub-domains.
7 Comparing the Knowledge of Kriol Speakers and Marra Speakers in Relation to Bush Medicine and Other Ethnobiological Domains

The previous chapter presented a first pharmacopeia of Marra bush medicine and provided qualitative commentary on how knowledge and practices of Marra people are being maintained or discontinued among L1 Kriol speakers aged between 20 and 45. This chapter continues the focus on bush medicine and broadens the discussion from individual taxa to using a range of methods to more carefully analyse aspects of bush medicine as a body of cultural knowledge and practice. Considered in this chapter are: "textural" and discourse features used by Marra speakers in texts on bush medicine, a quantitative study of Kriol speaker knowledge and use of bush medicine, and a survey of taxonomic knowledge of lizards among Marra and Kriol speakers.

Although bush medicines in the Roper River region are comparatively well documented (as demonstrated in the previous chapter), little research has been carried out that explores actual usage and knowledge patterns. Senior had claimed that there was "little evidence that people were currently using bush medicines on a regular basis" (2003: 155) but had not studied the topic carefully. Heath had earlier made a similar claim saying that "bush medicine is ... practiced to a limited extent, chiefly by older people" (Heath 1980b: 445). These claims contradict my own observations (and those described in the previous chapter), such as elderly Marra speakers like Betty Roberts and Maureen Thompson regularly carrying bush medicine around with them, or excursions into the bush that routinely incorporated the collection of various bush medicine types including gulban, ngalangga, dumbuyumbu and jirrama. It seemed apparent to me that the frequency of bush medicine usage in Ngukurr – among elders, at least – was being underestimated.

Even less known and understood is how young L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr perceive bush medicine, how much they know about it and the extent to which they use it. It is often assumed – and easy to assume – that because young people in Ngukurr are not acquiring heritage languages and increasingly place prestige on Western cultural phenomena and technologies, they are not using or do not know about bush medicine. It first became apparent to me that this may not be true in 2010 when I sat at Yawurrwarda (a billabong only a few kilometres from Ngukurr) with a Marra elder in his sixties and his three classificatory daughters, aged in their twenties, one of whom brought along her two
children (aged around 5 and 8). We were making a recording in Kriol involving all except the two children and their mother, who went a short distance away to fish and mind her children. At the time, her son had some painful boils or skin sores. While we were doing our 'language work', the young mother took it upon herself to quietly and matter-of-factly cut bark from a nearby ngalangga (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) tree. Although she had taken her son to the local medical clinic for treatment, she also self-prescribed treating her son's condition with *ngalangga* and had sufficient knowledge to independently acquire and prepare the medicine herself. What follows in this chapter is an effort to analyse and quantify bush medicine usage, knowledge and attitudes among two different groups: Marra speakers and young L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr (aged under 40).

Section 7.1 applies discourse analysis to two oral texts about bush medicine given by Marra speakers: Maureen Marranggulu Thompson talking about *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* (see §6.3.6) and Ginger Riley on *gulban* (see §6.3.1). This analysis is contrasted in §7.2 by presenting rhetoric from young people on the topic of bush medicine. This section continues with a quantitative study of the taxonomic knowledge and use of Bush medicine among young L1 Kriol speakers. Data and information collected from fourteen study participants is distilled into quantitative analyses that compares the knowledge and use of various taxa as demonstrated by young people with the documented knowledge and use by senior people and Marra speakers. Section 7.3 introduces another ethnobiological domain: lizards. A short analysis on lizard taxa known to Marra speakers and Kriol speakers alike is provided and this is used as a comparative tool to test whether the findings related to bush medicine are indicative of other domains within the broad area of ethnobiological knowledge.

### 7.1 Marra Bush Medicine in Discourse

This section presents analyses of two oral narrative texts in Marra pertaining to bush medicine, exploring the topic of bush medicine at the discourse level. Georgakopoulou describes the narrative mode of discourse as one that "performs the symbolic function of recreating or reconstructing reality through a story" (2011: 190). As such, analysing narratives can reveal information about the position that topics such as bush medicine have in the minds and worldview of Marra speakers. As Bruner argues,

... we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and
Analyses of narratives in American languages have shown that “narrative structure reflects sociocultural modes of interpreting the world and making sense of experience” (Georgakopoulou 2011: 195). Analysing narratives and oral texts by Marra speakers can similarly provide insights into their worldview. Two such narratives provided by Marra speakers are discussed below. The first is a short text by Maureen Marranggulu Thompson, recorded in 2011 as part of the Marra documentation project that complemented this study. Maureen discusses the medicine dirringgirl-dirringgirl (see Appendix 2 for a full transcript and §6.3.6 for discussion of the taxon). The second text analysed was recorded in the 1980s by the Nganinyurlma Media Association and features Ginger Riley discussing and demonstrating the medicine gulban (see Appendix 5 for a full transcript and §6.3.1 for discussion of the taxon). These two texts contain distinctive features and narrative structures; in Maureen’s short narrative on dirringgirl-dirringgirl, she departs from discussing the plant to range through themes of country, people/kin and totemic affiliations before returning to the plant as the main theme at the narrative’s conclusion. During Ginger Riley’s discussion of gulban, he incorporates the singing of ceremonial song cycles related to the plant into his discourse, demonstrating that for him, the biological world is intimately linked to the ceremonial and religious world. The structures and knowledge demonstrated in both these texts depart from anything attested among young Kriol speakers (discussed further in §7.2).

The analyses presented below examine the information contained in each text as well as ‘textural’ features of each narrative. Texture in discourse is “what holds the clauses of a text together to give them unity” (Eggins 1994: 85). This is related to the notion of ‘sequential implicativeness’ which recognises that each utterance or section of text is linked to or related to that which precedes it (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). Analyses of the themes contained in these narratives and their textural features reveal that they contain more than just a confident demonstration of knowledge about bush medicine; the structure of the narratives demonstrate how connected practical knowledge of bush medicine is with other aspects of cultural knowledge. That these features are not attested among L1 Kriol speakers suggests that the worldview of Marra speakers like Maureen and Ginger is one that is distinctive from L1 Kriol speakers.

### 7.1.1 Maureen Thompson’s Dirringgirl-dirringgirl Text

In 2011, Maureen Marranggulu Thompson recorded a short three-minute text with me while on a day trip to a crossing on the Wilton River located about 25km from Ngukurr.
The topic of the recording was the result of Maureen spotting a growing specimen of the bush medicine *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* (*Crinum* sp.) near where we were sitting. Readers can refer to the full transcript of the text in Appendix 2.

The sequence of topics and reference chain present in Maureen’s narrative is represented in the Table 7–1 below. Three major sections are delineated: the first and third sections are when the core theme is *dirringgirl-dirringgirl*. The second (middle) section is when Maureen temporarily abandons any mention of the bush medicine, instead focusing on a Marra man Juluba who had used the medicine, noting his country Wamunggu, clan affiliations and the creation story relating to Wamunggu. Within each major section, minor changes in topic and theme are also evidenced, as noted in Table 7–1. A description of thematic shifts occurring within Maureen’s text is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section (lines)</th>
<th>Major theme</th>
<th>sub-themes (lines)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 (1–15)       | *Dirringgirl-dirringgirl* | 1a) factual explanation (1–8)  
1b) anecdotal explanation (8–13)  
1a) factual explanation (revised) (14–15) |
|                |             | Linking device: (16) *mingi nanggaya*... ‘now, that...’ |
| 2 (16–27)      | Various distal themes | 2a) Juluba (16–19)  
2b) Wamunggu / country (17–19)  
2c) clan (20–24)  
2d) creation story (25–27) |
|                |             | Linking device: (27) ... (pause: 4.5s) *guda*... ‘that’s all...’ |
| 3 (28–40)      | *Dirringgirl-dirringgirl* | 1c) procuring (28–29)  
1a) factual explanation (repeated) (30–32)  
1b/2a/2c) anecdotal/non-core themes (repeated) (33–34)  
1a) factual explanation (repeated) (35–40) |
|                |             | Concluding device: (40) *Guda* ‘that’s all’ |

Table 7–1: Narrative structure of Maureen Thompson’s *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* text

Maureen’s text starts in what might be considered a conventional form for a narrative that is an ethnobotanical description: she states the name of the plant (line 1: *gana nyiyin-gugi*... ‘its name is...’), indicates it to me (line 5: *nana nanggaya bay-ajurlu nanggaya wuna* ‘that one standing, that one, see’) and mentions some physical attributes of the plant (line 6: *wuruja-gayi nanggaya gana n-birlal* ‘it has three leaves’).

Maureen then begins describing the application of the medicine, which represents the first minor shift in topic. She initially describes the application of *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* in line 8: *na-jiji-ni nana nanggaya* ‘that (one) is for (treating) sores’, giving an absolute, declarative description that would be familiar to Western audiences. Maureen then particularises the description of the medicine by recalling an actual instance of the
medicine’s use in treating a given person, Juluba, on a particular occasion: *nana jiji gana wugaluni ginyindi, yimbirri wayburri* ‘he had sores here, everywhere’ (lines 8,9).93 This shifts to a relative frame of reference to explain the application of *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* and allows Maureen to introduce oral history and personal experience into what was until then an instructional narrative. This shift allows kinterms and references to kin to be introduced into the text (line 10–12: *yani ya-gajirri... warrj-guningarli, wur-wanyi nani na-biligan-yurr... “my mother, she would get it, she put it into a billycan...”*). As discussed in Chapter 5, frequent use of kinterms is a prevalent feature of Indigenous language discourse.

Having introduced specific people into her text, Maureen then pivots the discourse at line 16, changing the main reference point of the narrative from the bush medicine to Juluba himself. The shift in the chain of reference is indicated by Maureen referring to Juluba as *nanggaya guymi gana wa-wurlu* ‘that one who is living in the north’, identifying him by his domicile at Numbulwar. By changing the topic to Juluba and identifying a location, Maureen introduces a new theme of ‘country’ into the narrative. In line 17, she mentions his birthplace, *Wamunggu* (discussed in §2.5.1), and introduces more specific aspects relating to the theme of country. She names *Wamunggu* as well as Juluba’s relationship to it (*jawurru radburr* ‘his country’), which – to audiences with shared cultural knowledge – also evokes concepts relating to land tenure, ceremonial roles and responsibilities to country and totems that are brought about through the system of semi-moieties discussed in Chapter 5.

Continuing with the theme of country, Maureen segues into mentions of clan or group affiliations (line 20: *wumanamajbarr-mob*). The introduction of the topic of country (specifically Wamunggu) and clan and tenure relationships to country leads Maureen to a brief discussion of totemic associations to Wamunggu, summarising its creation story:

(7.1) *Gaya nani na-garrimarla gana wubarrunyi warugu*  
there the[M:OBL] M[OBL]-taipan REL 3SG>3SG:lay_egg:PST:CONT egg  
There, the taipan was laying eggs.

*wuluwulungu gaya, Wamunggu.*  
in_the_middle there, [Placename]  
there in the middle, at Wamunggu.

93 This particularising strategy was also employed by Ngandi elder and speaker Sam Thompson when describing *dumbuyumbu* on *Bush Medicine From Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). He exemplified the application of the medicine by describing how he used it to treat three young men with a venereal disease.
The extended pause followed by *guda* 'that’s all’ signals the conclusion of this chain of reference. In the subsequent line (28), Maureen pivots the narrative back to *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* and her immediate environment, issuing an instruction to dig up the specimen she had originally spotted: *wirrinya nana nanggay gabu jaw-umi* ‘hey you two dig that up’. These final parts of the text restore *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* as the core theme of the narrative. Maureen cycles through the text’s earlier themes by reiterating the plant’s name ([*nana dirringgirl-dirringgirl warr-iwiganjiyi* ‘we call it dirringgirl-dirringgirl’], the real-life example of its application ([*gana yumarr-wanyi nana Juluba* ‘it made Juluba well’]) and the general properties of its application (*[ni-galundiyi nanggay wumbul ginyindi burrandi ... nana yumarr jawurr medisin* ‘(If) you have – whatchamacallit – ringworm here... that is a good medicine for it’). In the final two lines, she repeats the name of the plant and concludes with the discourse particle, *guda*, which commonly concludes a text or topic in Marra discourse.

In considering this short but complex text on the bush medicine *dirringgirl-dirringgirl*, we see Maureen cycle through a range of topics and provide information that demonstrates a depth of cultural knowledge, including knowledge of areas such as clan groups and their affiliations to country, individuals and their kinship relationships and affiliations to country and creation stories pertaining to an important site on Marra country. Beyond the narrative’s content, the structure of Maureen’s narrative – which is suggestive of the way she constructs reality – is complex in the way themes change and connect. Its structure is certainly unusual to a non-Indigenous audience and L1 Kriol speakers may also find the structure distinctive as similarly structured texts from Kriol speakers are not attested in this study.

### 7.1.2 Ginger Riley’s Gulban Text

L1 Marra speaker Ginger Riley discussed a different bush medicine, *gulban* (*Melaleuca stenostachya*), in the video *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). Like Maureen Thompson’s narrative described above, Riley’s text differs from any provided by young L1 Kriol speakers, but for different reasons to those described for the *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* text. Firstly, Riley’s section discussed here is not a continuous narrative but rather made up of four scenes that were edited together for the purposes of the video. A full glossed transcript of the text is presented in Appendix 5. While it does not constitute a complete narrative or text, it has been edited together to form a cohesive
whole. Secondly, Ginger Riley’s text differs from Maureen’s by being mostly in Kriol, although it does contain some short sections of Marra and L2 English. Lastly, given the edits, we cannot analyse the narrative structure to reveal something about Marra speakers’ “sociocultural modes of interpreting the world and making sense of experience” (Georgakopoulou 2011: 195) but we can observe specific features of Riley’s text – most notably, his incorporation of traditional/ceremonial song into his text about gulban.

Riley’s gulban segment in the Bush Medicine from Ngukurr video begins in an outdoor location where the plant grows natively. His text begins in Marra: he indicates the plant – ninya nana gulban ‘this is gulban’ – and provides the name of the plant: warr-ngaganjiyi gulban ‘I call it gulban’. He then switches to English, signalled by a metalinguistic comment (line 3), munanga na ‘European now’ (i.e. in European language: English). The next bit of information sees him state the creation being(s) that relates to the plant in lines 4–7:

(7.2) Dreamtime (1.0) dreamtime that (1.4) 
(In the) dreamtime, (in the) dreamtime, that...

wanim, olda memeid, (1.2) 
what the[PL] mermaid
whatchamacallit, the mermaids,

thei bin gu thru langa dis wanim na, (1.9) gulban
3PL PST go through LOC this what's it now gulban
They went through at this whatchamacallit, gulban.

This is followed by Riley singing, impromptu, a verse of the songcycle pertaining to gulban, which comprises a small part of the songcycles performed during traditional ceremonies.

The segment then cuts to the second scene, with Riley stating that gulban is a medicine and describing briefly its preparation. He then reiterates (line 11) that it pertains to the “mermaid” (gilyirring-gilyirring) creation beings before the scene concludes with Riley returning to its medicinal property, stating in English, good medicine.

Scene three cuts to an inside location and Riley describes and demonstrates the preparation and application of gulban, helped by some off-camera questions. The content and structure of the dialogue in this scene is not particularly different from anything that a young L1 Kriol or English speaker might provide on such a theme, apart from a common discursive practice used by many Aboriginal people (regardless of the language
being used) in which information seeking is done by proposing information rather than directly asking for information (Eades 1988: 106–107). In this instance, the information-seeking-by-suggestion is done via off-camera questions from Aboriginal production assistants (lines 16, 18, 20 and 22).

The fourth and final scene also takes place inside, with Ginger Riley still demonstrating the preparation of *gulban*. In this scene, Riley’s text initially returns to earlier themes where, using Kriol, he describes the plant in relation to the *gilyirring-gilyirring* (”mermaid”) creation beings that named it (line 25):

(7.3)  
\[
\text{Memeid bin, (1.3) gulum diskain, gulban.} \\
\text{mermaid PST name:TR this_kind plant_sp.} \\
The\text{ mermaid(s) spoke the name of this species, gulban.}
\]

The next theme Riley covers relates to knowledge and beliefs of his elders and the continuation of that knowledge and belief through him:

(7.4)  
\[
\text{En das weya, olpipul yustu (1.1) bilib} \\
\text{and that REL ancestors used_to believe} \\
\text{And that’s what the ancestors believed.}
\]

\[
\text{En (1.1) ai regen ai stil bilib} \\
\text{and 1SG reckon 1SG still believe} \\
\text{And I’d say that I still believe (it).}
\]

\[
\text{Because it’s good medicine (1.3) dijan gulban,} \\
\text{because it’s good medicine this plant_sp.} \\
\text{Because it’s good medicine, this gulban,}
\]

Riley follows this up with a description of the medicine’s application and preparation. Discussion of the preparation, i.e. by boiling, leads him to compare contemporary practices of boiling such medicine with pre-contact practices, describing how his predecessors would boil medicine in the large shells of saltwater mussels, called *mindiwaba* in Marra:

(7.5)  
\[
\text{Now wi gada biliken distaim. Wen… (4.0)} \\
\text{now 1PLINCL with billycan this_time when} \\
\text{Now, we have billycans these_days. When…}
\]

\[
\text{distaim na, wi nomo bin abum eni billycan bifo} \\
\text{this_time now 1PLINCL NEG PST have any billycan before} \\
\text{these_days now, we didn’t have any billycans before.}
\]

\[
\text{Onli mindiwaba, wi yusdu abum, en boiliim, garram tharran} \\
\text{only saltwater_mussel 1PLINCL used_to have and boil:TR with that} \\
\text{We only had saltwater mussel (shells) and (we) boiled it with that.}
\]
This information can be considered endangered or “lost” knowledge. It describes a practice no longer attested or known to younger generations of Marra people. Following this section, Riley revisits previously mentioned themes and information relating to the medicine’s application and how the knowledge and belief in its efficacy stems from Riley’s ancestors:

(7.6)  
\textit{ai bilib, burru yangtaim}  
1SG believe from youth  
I’ve believed (in it) since I was young.  
\textit{bikos, ai bin la olpipul all my life}  
because 1SG PST LOC ancestors all my life  
Because I was with (the) elders my whole life

Following this line and to conclude the scene and \textit{gulban} text, Riley says quickly \textit{iya na} "here now/then" and then reprises the songcycle pertaining to \textit{gulban}:

(7.7)  
Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji  
garrinya garrinya, garrinya garrinya  
Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji  
garrinya garrinya, garrinya garrinya

7.1.3 DISCUSSION: BUSH MEDICINE IN DISCOURSE

When Maureen Thompson discussed the bush medicine \textit{dirringgirl-dirringgirl} she used a distinctive narrative structure, in which she temporarily abandoned the plant as a theme, to convey knowledge of country, clans, kinship and totemic affiliations. Maureen’s text is an example of narrative and discourse structure that appears not to be attested among Kriol speakers. To L1 English and L1 Kriol speaking audiences alike the text can appear disjointed; the middle section appears to be ‘off-topic’.\textsuperscript{94} Yet it is possible to describe the chain of reference and identify discursive links between each section (as noted in the Table 7–1), so it can be argued that the narrative structure is coherent to Maureen. Following the ideas of narrative theorists such as Georgakopoulou and Bruner, the way in which Maureen structures her narrative reflects her "sociocultural modes of interpreting the world and making sense of experience" (Georgakopoulou 2011: 195).

The second text described above related to the bush medicine, \textit{gulban} (\textit{Melaleuca stenostachya}), was provided by L1 Marra speaker Ginger Riley who, in the recording,

\textsuperscript{94} A similarly “disjointed” text was documented from an L1 Alawa speaker with little indication that disconnection perceived by the researcher was noteworthy to the Alawa narrator (Dickson 2004).
spoke predominantly in Kriol. As this is an edited video, it is not so much the narrative structure that makes the text noteworthy but rather that Riley spontaneously sings a songcycle pertaining to *gulban*, part of a lengthy song series used in traditional ceremonies. Other distinctive features in Riley's text are his description of pre-contact methods of boiling bush medicine by using large mussel shells (*mindiwaba*) and when he relates the plant to a creation being, *gilyirring-gilyirring* (mermaid). Creation beings were also salient to Maureen Thompson in her text which saw her briefly summarise the Dreaming story pertaining to the location Wamunggu which was created by *Garrimarla* (Taipan). None of these textural features or displays of knowledge are attested in equivalent texts provided by L1 Kriol speakers under the age of 40.

The documentation of Marra undertaken as part of this study also saw the textural feature of impromptu singing of songcycle verses. This was attested several times from the most elderly and strongest Marra speaker, Topsy Mindirirju Numamurdirdi. Topsy's younger sister Gathawuy also demonstrated this textural feature in a recording session on Marra plants; during a lull in conversation after discussing the uses of *mandarlurra* (Snappy gum, *Eucalyptus leucophloia*), Gathawuy began to quietly sing part of a songcycle relating to the tree. During a discussion on lizards, Gathawuy's brother Juluba similarly sang songcycles relating to three separate lizard taxa that were being discussed. Note that the singing recorded in recent documentation was often as an aside, whereas Ginger Riley's singing in the *Gulban* text formed a core part of his text.

It was possible to consider bush medicine in the discourse of Kriol speakers by exploring the Kriol corpus collected during this study and comparing that to the discourse of Marra speakers. A total of seventeen L1 Kriol speakers younger than 40 were interviewed about bush medicine knowledge, providing almost thirteen hours of recorded data. Throughout these conversations, there were no instances of young L1 Kriol speakers discussing totemic features of bush medicine types or links to ceremonial aspects, including any mention of them featuring in ceremonial songcycles. Young people also did

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95 When Topsy launched into song during a recording of Marra narratives or conversation, she would sometimes be “shooshed” by some of the younger elderly Marra speakers. It is unclear whether they felt the singing was inappropriate because such songs are sometimes for restricted or knowledgeable audiences or simply because they felt it was not in keeping with the narrative or conversation underway or because it is a discursive practice that some of the younger Marra speakers might not be used to. Or the “shooshing” could trace back to an influence of early-life missionary teachings that frowned upon such expressions relating to traditional ceremonies.

96 Individuals contributed anywhere from a minimum of 30 minutes to a maximum of over three hours of recorded data.
not incorporate a broad range of cultural themes into their discussions of bush medicine like Maureen Thompson did in her dirringgirl-dirringgirl text. This is despite them often demonstrating considerable levels of knowledge of bush medicine and strong rhetoric supporting ongoing beliefs in bush medicine as a core part of their health beliefs (discussed further in §7.2).

When young Kriol speakers discuss bush medicine, their narratives tend to be shorter and they tend to restrict discussion to the medicine’s applications, such as the young woman, aged 20, who confidently discussed two types, gulban and warlan:

(7.8)  

\[\text{Ba gulban, thei gin yusu ba bedkol, wen thei diringgi for gulban 3PL can use:TR for mucus when 3PL drink:TR indit? En wen thei oldei smeli det gras, thei TAG and when 3PL HABIT smell:TR the grass 3PL bogi meigi det janurr gamat en, klinimap yu bathe make:TR the snot come_out and clean:TR:up 2SG tjes. Det warlan, im ba eni disis, ee... laik if yu chest the warlan 3SG for any disease TAG like if 2SG abu kensa, nogudwan kidni, daiyabedik bala... im kyuwa det have:TR cancer bad kidney diabetic person 3SG cure the ting. Owa, if yu wandi kwit smoking. thing or if 2SG want:TR quit smoking.}\]

Regarding gulban, they can use it to treat flu, when they drink it, right? And when they smell the plant (i.e. use as an inhalant), they wash with it (and) it loosens the mucus and clears your chest. Warlan is for any disease, isn’t it... like if you have cancer, (or) bad kidneys, (or you are) diabetic... it cures it. Or if you want to quit smoking.

Note that the woman offers some detailed and specific information on the application of the two medicines, however the information she provides is purely clinical. Two similar short Kriol narratives are given in §7.2.7. Other Kriol speakers do incorporate anecdotal information and introduce family and other aspects into short narratives on bush medicine. In (7.9), a 30-year-old father of three describes the medicinal use of Erythrophleum chlorostachys which he refers to as maypiny – its name in Wägilak, the speaker’s heritage language which he speaks with some fluency. He describes the tree’s medicinal application, before mentioning other uses (to make clapsticks and to create smoke used in smoking ceremonies) but he does not mention totemic features of the plant. His epilogue in the short narrative sees him describe how his learning of such plants is only partial, affected by knowledgeable elders passing away (lines 21–22):
Najawan (18.0)
Another one (is)...

det... aiyinwud tri, maypiny?
that... ironwood tree, maypiny?

maypiny thei gulum.
They call it maypiny.

La wi langgus:
in our language:

Maypiny.

Si det tri iya?
See the tree here?

Thei gajim than, wen yu abu sowa.
They get that, when you have sores.

Thei skinim, meigi det redwan skin, from the tri,
They skin it (i.e. remove the bark), so that the bark from the tree is red (i.e. get the inner bark),

en thei gajim en thei boilim.
and they get it and they boil it.

Wi gulum maypiny tri.
We call it maypiny tree.

Wi oldei yu im du bla... wen im get drai,
We regularly use it too for ... when it gets dry,

wi yusim- gaji ba... meigi birlma fo it- jamartak.
we use it-get it to ... make clapsticks.

Wen, beibi meibi abu sowa thei get that tri du.
When, babies might have sores, they get the tree too.

Im gud ba... kids. O big men.
It's good for... kids. Or adult men.

That tri there,
That tree there,

maypiny tri.
maypiny tree.

Samtaim wi yusu det lif weya wi du smoking,
Sometimes we use the leaves when we perform cleansing smoking ceremonies,

thas tha tri na.
that's the tree.

Laik ai bin irrimbat burru mai...pipul,
Like, I heard from my people,

wanim bin- dalimbak mi, yuno, wat- wat tri bush medisin.
what was-telling me, you know, what trees are bush medicine.

Sam mowa iya bat ai nimin get thru la ol pipul,
(There are) some more here but I didn't get through to elders,

ai bin jis gu ba as afwei en thei bin pasaweibat
I just went as far as halfway and they passed away.

Note that the above narrative shares some features with Maureen Thompson's text, such as repetition of the plant's name (lines 3 and 10). The text is also less clinical than the
previous Kriol text, incorporating additional themes such as transmission of knowledge from elders and non-medicinal uses of the plant, but the speaker falls short of digressing into themes of country, kin and totemic affiliations as Maureen did. The same speaker discussed another medicine, Buchanania obovata, and detailed a folk belief about the medicine – that burying a tooth by the tree will cause the tooth to grow back – but again fell short of introducing totemic themes:

(7.10) Yu breigi tuth, yu digi houl, pudu wansaid la det tri...
2SG break:TR tooth 2SG dig:TR hole put:TR next_to LOC the tree
wen ai bin lilwan ai bin breigi tuth. Main
when 1SG PST small 1SG PST break:TR tooth my
mami bin tell me, “go berri yu tuth la det plam
mother PST tell me go bury:TR 2SG tooth LOC the plum
tri”. Wal ai bin breigi, ai bin berri main
tree well 1SG PST break:TR 1SG PST bury:TR my
tuth. Ai bin libu la plam tri. limin grou
tooth 1SG PST leave:TR LOC plum tree 3SG:PST grow
det tuth. Ai kuden bilib tu.
the tooth 1SG couldn’t believe too

(If) you break a tooth, (then) you dig a hole, put it (i.e. the tooth) next to the tree… When I was small, I broke a tooth. My mum told me, “Go bury your tooth by that plum tree”. So I broke it off, I buried my tooth. I left it by the plum tree. The tooth grew. I couldn’t believe it either.

A final comment on the two Marra texts described above relates to the language media in which the texts were given. The textural features and cultural information that Riley presents are done so as part of a recording in which he speaks mainly Kriol rather than his L1, Marra. This indicates that, in this instance at least, Kriol is sufficient for Riley to encode such knowledge and features into his text. It is not the language medium of the text that encodes knowledge and fosters interesting textural features such as traditional singing. At the core of the distinctiveness of Riley’s text is his knowledge and life experience and how this is encoded in narrative and oral text. It is plausible that this knowledge, experience and patterns of narrative construction are attributable to him being an L1 Marra speaker, but he demonstrates that in this instance Kriol is sufficient for his desired communicative functions and narrating purposes. A similar argument could be made regarding Maureen Thompson’s dirringgirl-dirringgirl text in that the narrative structure or knowledge encoded in her text is not dependent on Maureen speaking in Marra, but is likely to be informed by the cultural knowledge and life experience that relates to her being a fully fluent Marra speaker.
7.2 Bush Medicine and Younger Generations

Expert levels of bush medicine knowledge are commonly found among Aboriginal elders in remote communities. In a recent ethnobiology, the last fluent speakers of Mangarrayi listed thirty-seven species used as bush medicine (Roberts et al. 2011) while elders speaking the endangered languages of Gurindji, Bilinarra and Malngin documented ninety-five plants used for medicinal purposes (Hector et al. 2012).

As shown in the previous chapter, Marra speakers similarly demonstrate expert knowledge. The pharmacopeia described in that chapter lists twenty-six bush medicine taxa documented by Marra elders, including: fourteen taxa that Betty and Freda Roberts composed texts about in 2007; ten taxa that featured in the Bush Medicine from Ngukurr video (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990); and eleven bush medicine taxa that Betty and her sisters described in the three volumes of Marra plants and their uses (Huddleston et al. n.d. (a); n.d. (b); n.d. (c)). The previous chapter also provided qualitative evidence that among people in Ngukurr a disparity exists between younger generations (e.g. aged 20–35) and their grandparents and great-grandparents who informed this study with their knowledge and use of bush medicine. The generational gap was clear during this study when young Kriol speakers were asked about bush medicine knowledge in the presence of parents and grandparents. I had to remind older people not to give hints to their children and grandchildren while I tested their knowledge as it was clear that they held more knowledge than their descendants. This extract shows a 30-year-old female, (who was one of the most knowledgeable young people I interviewed) being prompted by her parents (labelled Mo and Fa) and a fourth party on knowledge of gulban:

(7.11)

1 GD: *Yu sabi wani gulban?*  
Do you know what gulban is?
2 SH: *Yeah.*
3 SH: *Bat ai nomo sabi wijan det lif.*  
But I don’t know which leaf it is (i.e. what it looks like).
4 GD: *Bat yu bin irrim det neim?*  
But you’ve heard the name?
5 Mo: *Yu sabi wani thanja? Gulban?*  
You know what that is? Gulban?
6 Mo: *[Yu pudu la-]*  
[You put it in-]
7 SH: *[Ai bin foget.]*  
[I forgot.]
8 Mo: *Im heb.*  
It’s a herb.
Despite younger generations often displaying reduced knowledge and use of bush medicine (explored in greater detail below), it should be reiterated that bush medicine is only one aspect of health-related beliefs and practices that have their foundation in pre-contact times. "Supernatural" aspects of health, often referred to as sorcery, also retain importance among young L1 Kriol speakers. Senior stated that in Ngukurr "some sicknesses and many deaths are attributable to sorcery" (Senior 2001: 17) and describes how Ngukurr residents may attribute sudden illnesses or premature or accidental deaths to sorcery or 'black magic'. This is in keeping with my observations over years spent in Ngukurr, suggesting that this belief system is being maintained, although to what degree has not been qualified or quantified.

Reid describes how Yolŋu people modify health practices without changing the core of their health belief system, which appears to also apply to Kriol speakers:

Yolŋu ... are not closed to new conceptions of reality. Indeed they use and modify their ideas to cope with unfamiliar and often threatening changes. At the same time, though, the core of their medical belief system endures, for it is confirmed in Yolŋu minds by the events which are parading across the contemporary social stage. (Reid 1983: xxiv)

Evidence suggests that core pre-contact-derived health beliefs relating to both "supernatural" aspects of health systems and the efficacy and value of bush medicine are continuing among Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. The maintenance of beliefs pertaining to bush medicine is discussed below, presenting some of the rhetoric that young Kriol speakers use when discussing bush medicine.

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97 As discussed in §6.1.1, health belief systems among many Aboriginal people do not dichotomise "natural" and "supernatural" to the degree that Western health belief systems do, hence the quotation marks when referring to "supernatural" beliefs, acknowledging that the use of this term is Western-centric.
7.2.1 RHETORIC OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON BUSH MEDICINE

Senior’s study on health practices and beliefs in Ngukurr found that “in the rhetoric of the community a clear preference was stated for the use of bush medicines” (2001: 8). While Senior carried out significant primary research with a range of informants in Ngukurr, her findings do not differentiate beliefs and practices according to age or other demographics, as is attempted here. When we look specifically at younger generations, there is clear evidence that young people in Ngukurr retain a high degree of value placed on bush medicine in terms of its cultural value/status and its health benefits. The level of value evident is comparable to that of elders and consistent with what Senior found.

Rhetoric demonstrating the importance and prestige of practices surrounding bush medicine is readily expressed by young people in Ngukurr, even among participants in this study with some of the lowest levels of knowledge and usage. In a joint interview, two male informants in their mid-20s revealed that *mela nomo sabi bush medisin* ‘we don’t know bush medicine’ and could only name two or three types of medicine. This prompted me to enquire whether that means they now primarily rely on and/or believe in Western medicine:

(7.12)

1  GD:  *bat wani yunbala regen, yunbala regen...* (2.4)
       but what do you (two) think, do you (two) think...
2  GD:  *laik (. ) yu jas tras la munanga medisin na?*
       like... do you trust only Western medicine now?
3  KM:  *na=*
       no
4  DR:  *=ai nomo dringgi’, [ai nomo] oldei dringgim munanga medisin wen mi sik=*  
       I don’t take, I don’t take Western medicine when I’m sick
5  KM:  *[not me]*
6  KM:  *=not me, ai nomo gu-*
       not me, I don’t go-
7  DR:  *me- mela nomo, mela nomo gu na, na, na, na hospel o na klinik* (0.7)  
       we-, we don’t, we don’t go to, to, to, to the hospital or to the clinic
8  DR:  *ba dringgim medisin laik-*
       to take medicine, like-
9  DR:  *yuno, ba, ba peinkila, mela nomo yusu*
       you know, for, for painkillers, we don’t use it
10 GD:  *ngi?*
       don’t you?
11 DR:  *bikos mela nomo sabi wani (xx xx) them staf (1.0) yuno*
       because we don’t know what (is in) that stuff ... you know
12 GD:  *=so if you sikwan, mo beda yu dringgim=*  
       so if you’re sick, it’s preferable that you drink=
13 DR:  *=bush medisin=*
       =bush medicine=
The above passage indicates retention of belief in the value of bush medicine and a preference for using bush medicine over Western medicine despite these two young men admitting to having little specific knowledge of bush medicine types or usage. Two young women who demonstrated a greater degree of knowledge were also clear about their preference for and belief in the efficacy of bush medicine, despite one having more emphatic views than the other:

(7.13)

1. GD: *wani yu laigi mo, munanga medisin o bush medisin?*  
   what do you like more, Western medicine or bush medicine?
2. GD: *[o bouth?]*  
   or both?
3. EN: *bush medisin (2.7)*  
   bush medicine
4. PD: *bush medisin*  
   bush medicine
5. EN: *=bush medisin*  
   bush medicine
6. EN: *det munanga medisin (.) im meigi yu wik*  
   Western medicine, it makes you weak
7. PD: *sam (.) [lilibit rait (.) help you*  
   some (is) kind of okay, (it) helps you
8. EN: *[meigi yu slip (.) en,*  
   makes you sleep, and
9. PD: *some I don't like, like, takin' it too much (2.2) all different ones*  

98 KM is referring to Betty Roberts who had been referred to previously in the interview as an expert in bush medicine.

99 Here *bala* (a shortened form of *bobala* from ‘poor fellow’) is an exclamation of bittersweet sorrow. It is not necessarily a negative feeling as indicated by the etymon ‘poor fellow’ but rather indicates a feeling of fondness, longing, pity, nostalgia or a feeling of missing somebody/something, hence the translation: ‘heart goes out to’. 
Similar to the rhetoric described above, all young people interviewed for this study gave various testimonials praising the efficacy of a variety of specific taxa. For example, a 31-year-old male spoke about treating his son’s sores with bush medicine while visiting another community, Beswick. Speaking of post-treatment results he said:

\[(7.14) \text{Neksdei, alibala na, imin jis klin na.}\]

\[\text{next_day early then 3SG:PST just clean EMPH}\]

\[\text{En detmo la Beswick bin gedimbat shok.}\]

\[\text{and those LOC Beswick PST get:TR:PROG surprise}\]

Then next day, early, it was really clear (i.e. his skin). And those guys at Beswick were really surprised.

Another interviewee, a 33-year-old female, spoke of using the bark of Buchanania obovata to treat toothache, saying emphatically: \text{Im wek. Streitawei im wek. ‘It works. It works immediately.’}\]

Although young people in Ngukurr regard bush medicine highly and regularly praise its effectiveness, rhetoric, however, does not necessarily correlate to actual use or the retention of specific knowledge. The following section tests the reality underlying the rhetoric, presenting the results of a systematic survey of the knowledge and use of bush medicine among L1 Kriol speakers aged 22–35. The study provides quantitative data to further inform qualitative evidence such as that presented in Chapter 6. This study makes a contribution to ethnopharmacological and ethnobiological studies, particularly in that it does not target those who are considered ‘expert’, but rather a non-expert demographic. This allows us to describe the levels of knowledge and usage in a contemporary setting, rather than a description of salvaged endangered knowledge or a description of prescribed use as opposed to actual use, which is the focus of much ethnobiological research. The methodology and results of the study are described below.

\[\text{7.2.2 Methodology: Quantitative Study of Bush Medicine Knowledge and Use Among Young People}\]

Data on bush medicine presented so far has been predominantly qualitative, however recent advances in ethnobotanical research has seen the development and subsequent improvement of various methods of quantitative analysis. Hoffman and Gallaher (2007) summarise a range of studies that quantify the value of folk or biological taxa held by minority language groups or ethnic groups. Various researchers have attempted this by,
for example, surveying the salience of taxa, enumerating the number of uses and scaling their usefulness. One study that relates specifically to bush medicine is Quinlan et al. (2002) who applied quantitative methodologies to analyse traditional medicines used in a remote village in Dominica (Caribbean) to treat worms. Specifically, the investigation used quantitative methods to determine and compare the salience of ten taxa used locally to treat worms, finding a correlation between folk taxa with greatest salience and taxa that are known to Western science to be effective. Such quantitative studies provide precedents that can be applied to assess bush medicine knowledge of young people in Ngukurr and compare results with documented knowledge of elders and Marra speakers.

The study described here utilises some of the methods described by Hoffman and Gallaher (2007) to survey bush medicine knowledge and use among a key demographic in Ngukurr: young L1 Kriol speakers. Data was collected from fourteen research participants aged between 22 and 35, via interviews carried out in Ngukurr in May 2013. The interviews were structured yet flexible enough to ensure that participants were comfortable with the process and could generate tangential discussion. The survey template and consent form is reproduced in Appendix 12. Interviews were conducted in Kriol and carried out at various locations within Ngukurr community. Interviews generally took twenty-five to thirty minutes and were recorded (audio only) and subsequently transcribed. The main components of the interviews were:

1. Personal information – age, gender, children, education/employment and residency background, linguistic heritage and language proficiencies.
2. Free-listing exercise – bush medicine
3. Most recent experience of using bush medicine – general description and discussion
4. Checklist exercise – based on bush medicine taxa presented in Chapter 6
5. Preference exercise – list top 5 bush medicines
6. Free-listing exercise – lizards, see §7.3.

Participants were not randomly selected as is the preferred method (see e.g. Martin, 2004) but were approached by the researcher or suggested by other research participants. Random selection was not done for several reasons including logistics (the study was carried out with limited funding and time left for fieldwork) and to avoid selecting participants who would be reticent and/or not used to participating in research or working with non-Indigenous researchers. Care was taken to ensure that the pool of participants demonstrated diversity along a range of variables including gender, age,
education and employment, parental status and lineage (i.e. from a variety of the core family groups living in Ngukurr). Those who participated did so voluntarily and informed consent was obtained via an information sheet available in English and Kriol that was usually explained orally (see Appendix 12). Table 7–2 summarises the basic demographic information of the participants:

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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Range 22–35 years</td>
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<td>Average 29 years</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Up to Yr 12</td>
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<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to Yr 10</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>2104</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100 Boarding school location: Darwin: 11, Townsville (QLD): 1.
101 Two informants attended primary school in Numbulwar.
102 CDEP (Community Development Employment Projects) is a government employment program designed to increase employment opportunities in Indigenous communities which generally have small economies and few employment opportunities.
103 Includes library, sport & rec, women’s centre and outstation support.
104 Anindilyakwa: 1, Wägilak: 1.
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<th>Heritage language</th>
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<th>female only</th>
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<th>over 30</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>male only</th>
<th>female only</th>
<th>under 30</th>
<th>over 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-2: Demography of quantitative bush medicine study participants

7.2.3 RESULTS: FREE-LISTING EXERCISE (SALIENCE)

The first exercise that participants completed was a free-listing exercise in which they were asked to list as many types of bush medicine as they could. Participants were encouraged to list bush medicine types regardless of whether they knew an indigenous name or an English-based name for the taxon or if they could only offer a description of the taxon. Some participants did initially appear to be reticent to name bush medicine types that they did not know an indigenous name for, perhaps having some misconceptions that the study was focused on nomenclature in traditional languages (as would be the case with many studies of this type). After reassurance and further explanation, any participants who may have been confused about the task completed it comfortably and satisfactorily. The overall results relating to total number of taxa listed in the free-listing exercise are provided in Table 7–3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (N=14)</th>
<th>male only (N=7)</th>
<th>female only (N=7)</th>
<th>under 30 (N=7)</th>
<th>over 30 (N=7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest list length</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest list length</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean list length</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of taxa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxa listed also</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>described in Chapter 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxa listed not</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>described in Chapter 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–3: Overall results of number of bush medicine taxa listed in free-listing exercise

Table 7–3 shows that all participants named at least three taxa, with the highest being two female participants who each named nine taxa. There was some differentiation based on gender, with the seven female participants listing just over seven taxa on average, while the seven male participants averaged just under five taxa. Collectively, however, the men named a total of 15 taxa, only one fewer than the women. In total, 21
different taxa were listed by the participants, including eight taxa that were not discussed in the previous chapter. There was also some differentiation based on age. The seven participants aged between 30 and 35 listed on average two more taxa than the younger cohort aged 22–28. The older group were also able to list eight more taxa than younger ones. Only one person in the younger group listed a taxon that the older group did not (pinifek 'spinifex', Triodia microstachya).

Free-listing exercises also allow taxa to be analysed and compared for salience, based on the principle that those taxa that are listed more frequently and are higher in the list are those which are more culturally and cognitively salient. The salience measure, based on methods developed by Smith (1993), combines frequency and order into a single index, whereby each instance in which a taxon (A) is listed is scored according to the formula:

\[
Salience \text{ measure} = \frac{\text{Sum of the taxon's percentile ranks}}{\text{Number of participants}}
\]

A taxon's percentile rank is found by applying the following formula each time it appears on a list:

\[
\text{Percentile rank of } A = \frac{\text{Number of taxa in list} - \text{order of } A}{\text{Number of taxa in list}}
\]

So, for example, taxon A appears in three lists: once as the second of four taxa, once as the first of three taxa and one as the fifth of five taxa. For each of the three instances in which it is being listed, a percentile rank is calculated:

\[
(1) \frac{2}{4} = 0.5 \quad (2) \frac{1}{3} = 0.67 \quad (3) \frac{5}{5} = 0.0
\]

The salience measure is arrived by adding the three percentile ranks and dividing this total by the total number of study participants:

\[
Salience \text{ measure} = \frac{0.5 + 0.67 + 0.0}{14}
\]

In this example, the salience measure would be 0.0836.

Table 7–4 shows each bush medicine taxon that was listed, the frequency with which each was listed and its salience measure.

---

105 It should be noted, though, that the youngest person interviewed (22) was one of the most knowledgeable, listing eight taxa, while the two oldest (35) listed five and nine taxa each.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bush medicine</strong> (common name/s in Kriol)</th>
<th><strong>English name</strong> (where available)</th>
<th><strong>Species name</strong></th>
<th><strong>Times mentioned (N=14)</strong></th>
<th><strong>% of informants</strong></th>
<th><strong>Salience measure</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumbuyumbu</td>
<td>Sandalwood</td>
<td><em>Santalum lanceolatum</em></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.7026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayarranja</td>
<td>Sandpaper fig</td>
<td><em>Ficus opposita</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.2969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalangga, waitbak tri</td>
<td>River gum</td>
<td><em>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</em></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.2847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyiya, dogbul</td>
<td>Emu bush</td>
<td><em>Grewia retusifolia</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.2149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlan, warlantri</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Eucalyptus tectifica</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smeligras, smelilif</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><em>Pterocaulon serrulatum</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plamtri</td>
<td>Green plum</td>
<td><em>Buchanania obovata</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.1110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulban, titri</td>
<td>Ti-tree</td>
<td><em>Melaleuca stenostachya</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.0691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnarr, mabultri</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Owenia vernicosa</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.0564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupi</td>
<td>Blackcurrant</td>
<td><em>Antidesma ghesaembilla</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.0476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardayka</td>
<td>Stringybark</td>
<td><em>Eucalyptus tetrodonta</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinifek</td>
<td>Spinifex</td>
<td><em>Triodia microstachya</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlabangu</td>
<td>Freshwater mussel</td>
<td><em>Velesunio wilsonii</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neilfish medisin</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.0317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnaya</td>
<td>Lily root</td>
<td><em>Nymphaea violacea, N. gigantea?</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burduga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><em>Clerodundrum floribundum</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrunburrun</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cassytha filiformis?</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souptri</td>
<td>Soap tree</td>
<td><em>Acacia holosericea</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemingras</td>
<td>Lemongrass</td>
<td><em>Cymbopogon procerus</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisiling tri</td>
<td>She-oak</td>
<td><em>Casuarina equisetifolia</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawpiny</td>
<td>Ironwood</td>
<td><em>Erythrophleum chlorostachys?</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–4: Frequency and salience measures of all taxa listed
Only one taxon, *dumbuyumbu* (*Santalum lanceolatum*), was named by all 14 participants, 10 of whom listed it first. It is clearly the most salient taxon among young Kriol speakers and can be seen as the prototypical example of bush medicine. Another three taxa were listed by at least half the participants and a further five were listed by at least four study participants. In total, seven taxa had a salience measure greater than 0.1: *dumbuyumbu*, *mayarranja*, *ngalangga*, *guyiya*, *warlan*, *smeligras* (*jiirrama*) and *plamtri*. The taxa that are most salient among young Kriol speakers are not a homogeneous group but differ along several variables:

- Most of the most salient taxa are trees but two are low-growing flowering plants (*guyiya*, *smeligras*)
- Most of the most salient taxa have multiple or generic applications, but *guyiya* is used specifically to treat diarrhoea and *plamtri* treats toothache.
- Various plant parts are used in the application of the most salient taxa, including roots, bark and leaves.
- In almost all cases, the most salient taxa are prepared by boiling, but are applied in various ways including as a wash, an inhalant or ingested.

Most of the taxa (12 out of 21) were listed by only one or two participants. This included all eight taxa that were listed that were not discussed in Chapter 6. Further discussion of these results is presented in §7.2.7 and factors that contribute to salience of various taxa are discussed in §7.2.8.

### 7.2.4 RESULTS: CHECKLIST EXERCISE

To complement the free-listing exercise, study participants were given the opportunity to respond to a checklist of bush medicine names, providing them with prompts from which they could further articulate knowledge of various bush medicine taxa (Question 5 on the survey reproduced in Appendix 12). The checklist was based upon the taxa discussed in Chapter 6 and consisted of a mix of English-based/Kriol names and Marra names.

As a result of this exercise, all but one participant increased the number of bush medicine taxa they reported having knowledge of. A summary of the results is provided on Table 7–5, which compares the post-checklist results with the results from only the free-listing exercise, broken down further by gender (seven male and seven female participants) and age (seven participants aged 22–28, seven participants aged 30–35):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of taxa known – mean</th>
<th>Number of taxa known – lowest</th>
<th>Number of taxa known – highest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After freelist – all</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After checklist – all (increase)</td>
<td>8.6 (+2.6)</td>
<td>4 (+1)</td>
<td>13 (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After freelist – male only</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After checklist – male only (increase)</td>
<td>7.7 (+2.8)</td>
<td>4 (+1)</td>
<td>11 (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After freelist – female only</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After checklist – female only (increase)</td>
<td>9.5 (+2.4)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
<td>13 (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After freelist – under 30s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After checklist – under 30s (increase)</td>
<td>6.3 (+1.3)</td>
<td>4 (+1)</td>
<td>9 (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After freelist – over 30s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After checklist – over 30s (increase)</td>
<td>10.9 (+3.9)</td>
<td>8 (+3)</td>
<td>13 (+4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–5: Number of taxa known before and after checklist exercise, including age and gender variables

The results relating to gender variables are illustrated in Figure 7–1, which shows the mean number of taxa known to all participants before and after the checklist part of the interview as well as gender-differentiated results:

![Figure 7–1: Mean number of bush medicine taxa known, by gender, before and after checklist exercise](image)

As shown in Table 7–5 and Figure 7–1, the checklist exercise in almost all cases resulted in participants increasing the number of bush medicine taxa they could remember and describe, with the mean number of taxa known increasing to 8.6 (up from 6). Figure 7–1
shows that the gap between knowledge of young men and women diminished slightly after the checklist exercise, with the average number of taxa known to men increasing to 7.7 (up 2.8) compared to the average for female informants which increased by 2.4 to 9.5.

In contrast, when the results are differentiated for age (separating the seven participants aged under 30 from the seven who were aged between 30 and 35), a more striking pattern is evident, as shown in Figure 7–2:

![Figure 7–2: Mean and range of number of bush medicine taxa known, by age, before and after checklist exercise](image)

Figure 7–2 shows that the older group demonstrated knowledge of a greater number of taxa than the younger group. Access to prompts via the checklist resulted in the older group increasing the number of taxa they knew of at a greater rate than the younger group. After the checklist exercise, the younger group demonstrated knowledge of an average of 6.3, an increase of 1.3 from having done only the freelisting exercise. For the older group, the checklist helped them to recognise an average of 3.9 additional taxa, up to an average of almost 11 taxa each. Note that the post-checklist average for the younger group of 6.9 was still lower than the pre-checklist average of the older group (7).

This suggests that even within a narrow age range of 22–35, age is a factor in the level of knowledge of bush medicines types that Kriol speakers hold, although it must be acknowledged that with such a small study sample, the significance of these results cannot be assured. This evidence also does not conclusively show that bush medicine knowledge is diminishing over time, as obviously the older group have had more time to acquire bush medicine knowledge and it may well be that when they reach their 30s, the
younger cohort will be able to demonstrate a level of knowledge comparable to that shown by the over 30s in this study. A longitudinal study would be required to test this.

7.2.5 RESULTS: MOST RECENT USAGE

Participants were also asked to recall and describe the most recent instance in which they had used bush medicine. They were asked about the following aspects:

- what type of medicine was used
- what ailment did it treat
- how long ago was the event
- who collected and prepared the medicine
- how effective was the treatment; and
- whether the participant also sought Western medical treatment.

This part of the study provides an indication of various aspects of bush medicine usage such as frequency, the range of taxa in current usage, the range of ailments that bush medicine is treating in contemporary contexts and to what extent young people use it independently or rely on more senior and more expert bush medicine practitioners.

When participants were asked what they had used bush medicine for (in the most recent instance they had used it), eight different ailments or reasons were given, as shown in Table 7–6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ailment</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toothache</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flu/sinus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sores</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boils</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hangover</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used as a tonic/preventative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7–6: Most recent instance of using bush medicine: ailment treated*

When asked what type of bush medicine they had used, participants named six different bush medicines types:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bush medicine type</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngalangga</td>
<td>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbuyumbu</td>
<td>Santalum lanceolatum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jirrama/smelilif</td>
<td>Pterocaulon serralatum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlan</td>
<td>Eucalyptus tectifica</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maypiny</td>
<td>Erythrophleum chlorastachys</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plamtri</td>
<td>Buchanania obovata</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–7: Most recent instance of using bush medicine: type of medicine used

To indicate frequency, Table 7–8 shows when the most recent instance of using bush medicine took place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most recent usage</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within a week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within a month</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 6 months</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within a year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 3 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–8: Most recent instance of using bush medicine: time

Figure 7–3 combines data from the previous two tables, correlating the time of the most recent usage with the type of medicine used:

Figure 7–3: Time of most recent usage of bush medicine, by type used

Participants were also asked about who had collected the bush medicine: 57% (8 of 14) said they had collected the medicine themselves while 36% (5 of 14) had obtained it
from others. For the five informants who had procured medicine from others, they had obtained it from women aged over 50 (four separate individuals).

7.2.6 RESULTS: PREFERRED BUSH MEDICINE

In the final exercise relating to bush medicine, participants were asked to list their “Top 5” bush medicines (or as many as they could/wanted to list). Twelve participants attempted the activity and were able to provide at least a “Top 2”. Only five participants created a complete “Top 5” list. The results are given in Table 7–9 (fractions are a result of participants putting two taxa in the same position):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bush medicine type</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Position on “Top 5” list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbuyumbu</td>
<td>Santalum lanceolatum</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlan</td>
<td>Eucalyptus tectifica</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalangga</td>
<td>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maypiny</td>
<td>Erythrophleum chlorastachys</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smeligras/Smelilif</td>
<td>Pterocaulen serralatum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plamtri</td>
<td>Buchanania obovata</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayarranja</td>
<td>Ficus opposita</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulban/Titri</td>
<td>Melaleuca stenostachya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyiya</td>
<td>Grewia retusifolia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnarr/Mabultri</td>
<td>Owenia vernicoso</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinifek</td>
<td>Triodia microstachya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neilfish medisin</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnaya</td>
<td>Nymphaea violacea (bulb)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardayka (Stringybark)</td>
<td>Eucalyptus tetrodonta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–9: “Top 5 bush medicine” survey results

The above table demonstrates significant variation among individuals regarding bush medicines they prefer or believe are most effective. Among the twelve who attempted the activity, six different taxa were named as the best, preferred or favourite bush medicine. Dumbuyumbu, which was earlier found to be clearly the most salient and prototypical taxon, was most frequently listed as the top medicine. However, dumbuyumbu’s high degree of salience did not wholly correlate with its preference rating: two of the twelve participants who attempted the “Top 5” task did not list dumbuyumbu at all and, while ten participants listed dumbuyumbu first in the free-listing exercise, only four named it their top medicine (another shared the top spot with ngalangga). Overall, the study participants showed a significant degree of diversity when listing their top or preferred medicines: a total of 14 taxa were named during the exercise, nine of them by at least two informants.
The following two sections discuss the results of the quantitative study further, commenting on some of the overall findings.

### 7.2.7 Discussion: Quantitative Study of Bush Medicine Knowledge and Use Among Young People

The quantitative study of bush medicine knowledge and usage among young L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr is possibly the first such ethnobotanical study in Australia that focuses specifically on a non-expert group who do not have a traditional language as their L1. Such groups are often perceived to (a) hold less knowledge and (b) engage in bush medicine practices less frequently than older people who are considered experts in such domains and/or are native speakers of an Indigenous language. Such perceptions exist among outsiders as well as within senior community members. One Marra elder, upon hearing this study described to a prospective participant, despaired that "they don't know nothing", while Heath documents Maadi, a Nunggubuyu elder, who in the 1970s claimed that bush medicine practices were being abandoned:


Now it (bush medicine) is no longer in use, we do not use it, we do not do that to it, swallow it, make it. That sort of thing, it is ours, of long ago, of the time of the elders. (Maadi in Heath 1980b: 462, translation has been altered)

Despite assertions such as these, young people's actual knowledge or use of bush medicine (or lack thereof) have rarely, if ever, been tested via systematic studies such as this one. In her study of health practices and beliefs in Ngukurr, Senior briefly discussed bush medicine, saying that "Ngukurr people were familiar with a variety of bush medicines which were predominantly used to treat the symptoms of colds, flus and headaches" (2001: 8) and describes eight taxa. It is clear that, as expected, Marra elders and speakers are familiar with a larger number of bush medicine taxa, as indicated by the twenty-six taxa described in the previous chapter. Observations in the field also indicate that senior Marra people are more frequent users and collectors of bush medicine and generally more skilled practitioners. The results of this study of young people show that while they can list only an average of six taxa each, some individuals know as many as thirteen. Collectively, they listed twenty-one different taxa as bush medicine. This indicates that the taxonomic knowledge they hold is greater than that which is generally assumed by senior community members and outsiders alike but remains less than that documented from Marra speaking elders. The results of the study also show that while
young people as a group of individuals broadly demonstrate a fairly high level of taxonomic knowledge – twenty-one taxa – a significant proportion of this knowledge is limited to individuals and not attested as collective knowledge: eight of the twenty-one taxa were listed by only one or two participants while only one taxon was listed by all study participants. This may indicate that much of the knowledge that young Kriol speakers collectively hold is fragile and in danger of being lost. Conversely, it may mean that individual knowledge will over time be disseminated to others, leading to some of the currently lesser known taxa increasing their cultural and cognitive salience as the young informants age. A longitudinal study with the same participants would be able to illuminate this further.

In terms of number of taxa known, it is interesting to note that the study participants listed eight taxa that were not named in the sources that contributed to Chapter 6. Four of those taxa were bush medicine types used in neighbouring communities in which participants had spent a considerable amount of time. One was a type of medicinal spinifex used in Hodgson Downs by Alawa people (wumarna or Triodia microstachya, see Sharpe 2001a: 131) and three were medicines known to Yolŋu and used in areas to the north of Ngukurr. A further two were bush food types that young people considered to have medicinal properties, including one – marlabangu (freshwater mussel) – which is an attested medicine (see Roberts et al. 2011: 113). This suggests that young people in Ngukurr are drawing on traditional knowledge from a large geographic area, perhaps greater than that of their ancestors who lived in the pre-contact era. On the flipside, some young people demonstrated reduced knowledge of their immediate environment, with a number of study participants unaware of common taxa that are abundant in the environs of Ngukurr. However, with greater mobility, young people have access to bush medicine knowledge from further afield and the results of this study show that in some cases they do acquire this knowledge.

Young people demonstrated a significant degree of individual variation in their taxonomic knowledge, as well as a similar degree of variation in relation to which medicines they prefer or believe are most effective. When asked to nominate their favourite (in Kriol: nambawan), six different taxa were named. It was evident that some of this variation was a pattern resulting from knowledge and preferences within that person’s extended family group. One participant remarked on the preferences of her extended family:
Diversity in bush medicine preferences was also influenced by individual experience. The 26-year-old male who nominated plamtri as his favourite medicine explained:

Because my wisdom tooth was hurting me really bad causing me to have a headache and I was dizzy, and when I went and did that – boiled it and I rinsed my mouth out with it, it took away the pain.

Reasons for varying preferences aside, the diversity shown by young people in relation to their bush medicine knowledge demonstrates that it is a dynamic domain undergoing considerable, if somewhat inconsistent, maintenance. This is reinforced by the results of the study that relate to the use of bush medicine. Over one-quarter of participants (4 of 14) said they had used bush medicine in the past month – two had used ngalangga and two dumbuyumbu. One male (aged 35) had used ngalangga as recently as the week prior to treat boils on his leg which he pointed to during the interview as he described how he treated them. In another interview, a 22-year-old female discussing dumbuyumbu casually reported:

This evidence along with other results from this study contradicts earlier suggestions that bush medicine is practiced to a "limited extent" (Heath 1980b: 445), a misconception stemming back to Heath’s fieldwork in the 1970s. In addition to the recent use reported by a number of young people, the large range of applications they reported further
indicates a continuation of bush medicine practices. As shown in Table 7–6, eight different reasons or ailments were cited by the fourteen study participants as to why they had used bush medicine, even though they were referring only to their most recent usage. The most common treatment was for toothache, likely to be attributable to the lack of dental care available in remote regions. Sores and flu/sinus were also common ailments cited. Additional reasons for using bush medicine were to treat boils, diarrhoea, high blood pressure, hangovers or simply consumed as a tonic or preventative measure. This wide range of applications is inconsistent with Senior’s suggestion that bush medicine was used “predominantly to treat of colds, flus and headaches” (2001: 8) and suggests that the knowledge and usage of bush medicine among young people in Ngukurr is more prevalent and sophisticated than previously thought. In addition to the range of applications, several informants reported prescribing treatments of more than a single application. One who treated high-blood pressure with warlan reported a self-administered two-week course of treatment and reported the outcome kili im olagija ‘killed it permanently’. Another described a three-day process of treating her youngest son’s sores with ngalangga:

I boiled it for this baby last time (I used it). Ngalangga tree. Yeah, he was sick with… diarrhoea and… sinus, plus he had asthma too. I just broke off some ngalangga for him then and… broke it off and then went and boiled it for him. The next day we went and broke off some beyond the old man Gumbuli’s house… the next day we went and broke some off at the river.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{106} Note that in the Kriol text the verb \textit{breigi} ‘break:TR’ is being used in a way that is distinct from its English etymon \textit{break}. In the Kriol example, it is used with a sense of breaking off part of a tree, for a specific use such as to make bush medicine. An overt object is not required – \textit{ai bin breigi} (la riba) but transitivity is encoded with the \textit{-i(m)} suffix. The direct English translation – \textit{I broke it (by...}
But not all gave evidence of a high degree of maintenance. Several study participants demonstrated little taxonomic knowledge. Even after listening to a checklist of bush medicine names (comprised of Kriol names as well as Indigenous language names), four participants could still only identify five or fewer taxa. Likewise, in relation to usage, three participants said they had not used bush medicine in the past three years. This indicates variation in levels of knowledge and usage among young people. There is some evidence that gender is a predictor of taxonomic knowledge with men knowing on average two fewer taxa than women. But with a high degree of individual variation, gender is not a strong predictor; for example four of the seven men interviewed displayed knowledge of over 10 taxa which was higher than the median number for women which was nine.

Despite a number of individuals demonstrating little independent or first-hand knowledge of bush medicine, there is evidence that they access bush medicine knowledge not via their own knowledge but rather by utilising the knowledge of other community members. To put it simply, young people who do not know what to do, know who to go to. Typically, those intermediaries are senior community members who are part of their immediate family network and are known to be a source and resource in the domain of bush medicine. See, for example, one of the informants who performed poorly on the taxonomic knowledge tasks, referring in an interview to Betty Roberts being “his clinic” (see Example 7.12, line 17).

Note that in §7.2.5, five respondents stated that on their most recent instance of using bush medicine, they acquired it from others. Two of those were young women who got jirrama – or smellif, as they also called it – from their maternal grandmother (who happens to be Betty Roberts, already described above as a major proponent of that particular medicine, see §6.3.5). Another three respondents sourced their medicine from others and in each case they sourced it from women aged over 50 who they know hold good or expert knowledge of bush medicine. A further example of young people demonstrating use and belief in bush medicine but relying on secondary sources to procure it is provided courtesy of a Facebook entry from a 25-year-old Ngukurr resident:

---

*the river* – is not synonymous with the Kriol clause. Note that the Marra coverb mud (Heath 1981: 474) covers a semantic range more like the Kriol breigi(m) than the English break.
The young man, a L1 Kriol speaker from Ngukurr, describes how he staved off a hangover from birthday celebrations by making his uncle prepare bush medicine for him. Although it is uncommon to see young people in Ngukurr discussing bush medicine on social media, it is not unheard of, indicating further that bush medicine has some degree of salience across the youngest generations of adults in Ngukurr. Further examples from Facebook – this time from two young mothers – are given below:

For bush medicine to feature on the Facebook feeds of young people of Ngukurr and surrounds shows that it is retaining importance and still being used, and also that young people are bringing the pre-contact-derived domain of bush medicine into new domains that are particular to young people.
In addition to evidence of maintenance of knowledge and practices, this study also found instances of innovation among young Kriol speakers, further demonstrating the vitality of bush medicine practices. For example, one participant described mixing several medicines together to create a concoction which is rarely attested in Aboriginal bush medicine practice:

(7.19) Det taim wen ai bin abu det swainflu, ai bin the time when 1SG PST have:TR the swineflu 1SG PST
gu la klinik, en thei bin jis oni gimi go LOC health_clinic and 3PL PST just only gimme
penadol. Thei bin jis oni gimi penadol en den, paracetamol 3PL PST just only gimme paracetamol and then
thei bin dalim mi thei kuden du enijing about it. 3PL PST tell:TR 1SG 3PL couldn't do anything about it
Thel bin dalim mi there's no, any medicine ba det 3PL PST tell:TR 1SG there's no medicine for the
ting, so ai bin lafta yusu det ngalangga na en thing so 1SG PST had_to use:TR the ngalangga then and
det... pinifek gras... en dem, keldapwan na smeligras. the spinifex grass and those curled_up EMPH smelly_grass
Boelim oldot togetha, en bogibogibat na, boil:TR whole_lot together and bathe[REDUP]:PROG then
fo wan wik.
for one week

The time I had swine flu, I went to the clinic, and they only gave me Panadol. They only gave me Panadol, and then, they told me they couldn’t do anything about it. They told me there’s no medicine for it, so I had to use ngalangga then, and that spinifex grass, and those, curled up things – smelly grass. Boil them all together and then wash with it, for a week.

[20130520KRIOLgNGUpd01a_00:18:00]

Another example of young people innovating with bush medicine came from a young man who described the use of dumbuyumbu by football players prior to them taking the field for a game:

(7.20) Samtaim wi yusu wen wi plei futbul. Bifo sometimes 1PLINCL use:TR when 1PLINCL play football before
wi plei, mela oldot dringgi olda bois, ba 1PLINCL play 1PLEXCL whole_lot drink:TR the[PL] boys to
meigi lait insaidwei. make:TR light internally
Sometimes we use it when we play football. Before we play, we all drink it, all the boys, to make us “light” on the inside.

[20130509KRIOLgNGUpd01a_00:05:39]
7.2.8 DISCUSSION: ENGLISH AND INDIGENOUS NOMENCLATURE AND THEIR ROLE IN KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION

While evidence suggests a greater level of knowledge and use maintenance is occurring than previously thought, a more complex task is assessing the role that the language of origin of bush medicine names has in the transmission (or lack thereof) of knowledge. During the bush medicine free listing exercise, the 14 participants collectively listed seventy-eight tokens. Forty-five of those were listed with a name from a local Indigenous language. Only five of the Indigenous names used were names not attested in Marra. On nineteen occasions, the medicine was listed with an English name or English-derived name commonly used in Kriol. On fourteen occasions, the taxon was listed by only a description (given in Kriol) or by pointing/indicating a nearby specimen. The etymology of the bush medicines listed in this study are summarised in Figure 7–7:

As Figure 7–7 shows, 58% of the bush medicines listed were done so with a name derived from traditional languages of the region, 27% were listed with an English-derived name, while 18% were listed with only a description (given in Kriol) or indicated by spatial deixis.

Alternatively, the etymology of nomenclature can be approached from the perspective of the taxon. The Kriol study participants free-listed twenty-one separate bush medicine taxa with a wide range of frequency from the most salient taxon, dumbuyumbu, listed by all participants to ten taxa that were listed by only one participant.

\[107\] In three instances, the Indigenous name was also suffixed with the Kriol – tri (tree).
Fourteen of the twenty-one bush medicine taxa that were named were listed with a non-English derived name, while ten names were derived from English. One taxon was listed by two participants who used only a description. Figure 7–8 summarises the nomenclature of all twenty-one bush medicine taxa listed in the free listing exercise:

![Figure 7–8: Etymology of bush medicine names, by taxon (N=21)](image)

Figure 7–8 shows us that almost half of the bush medicine taxa known to young people were listed only with a name derived from local languages, around one-quarter were listed only with names derived from English and a remaining five taxa were in variation, with individuals using either an English-based name or a name from a local language. Two-thirds of the total taxa listed were known by a local name to at least one participant.

Although the use of Indigenous language-derived names is common among young Kriol speakers, it is difficult to assess what role the language of origin of bush medicine nomenclature has in the maintenance of knowledge among Kriol speakers. After reviewing the interviews carried out in this study, it appears that the salience of a medicinal taxon can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

- Social practice (e.g. is it something your family uses regularly, were you explicitly shown it by more senior family members)
- Personal experience
- Physical proximity (i.e. is it something you regularly see)
- Efficacy
- Abundance
- Specificity of its application
- Nomenclature or etymology of bush medicine name?
Given the raft of factors contributing to salience, the language from which a taxon’s name is derived may not play an obvious role in the maintenance of knowledge pertaining to that taxon. However, evidence to the contrary is available: names derived from local languages were usually listed earlier in the free listing exercise and medicines known exclusively or mostly by an Indigenous name appeared to be more salient. This may suggest that nomenclature in local languages increases salience but conversely it could indicate that salient bush medicines are more likely to retain a name in a local language. This is a difficult-to-resolve chicken/egg situation. Note also that names are not even compulsory or sufficient: as noted in Figure 7–7, as 19% of the time study participants were able to list a taxon without using a name at all, by either pointing to or describing the taxon.

If we consider individual taxa and observe reasons as to why they retain salience (or not), a diverse range of reasons are evident. The seven most salient taxa – those with a salience measure of over 0.1 – are considered individually below, noting likely reasons for their salience:

1. **Dumbuyumbu** (salience measure: 0.7026) was the only taxon known to all participants and the only taxon with a high degree of salience that was known exclusively by its indigenous name. Possible reasons as to why the name retains such salience among Kriol speakers include that it is found in all substrate languages and that the rhyming jingle name increases its phonological salience. Additionally, attributes of *dumbuyumbu* such as, being a tree, that its only use is medicinal, and its effectiveness (as noted by Western pharmacology, Palombo and Semple 2001) contribute to its status as the prototypical bush medicine among young people in Ngukurr. During interviews, many participants could describe instances of themselves or others using *dumbuyumbu* and/or of locations where specimens grow.

2. **Ficus opposita**, known as *Mayarranja* (salience measure: 0.2969) was listed by eight of fourteen informants. Of those eight, four named it with its Indigenous name, three offered only a description and one named it incorrectly as "marrarranja". The salience of *Ficus opposita* appears to be attributable to several factors:
   - the distinctive physical qualities of the tree, particularly the coarse texture of the leaves which all commented on when describing the plant,
   - its proximity to the community (several specimens grow in Ngukurr, including in some household yards), and
   - its additional use as a food source (seasonal fruits).
Given that *mayarranja* retains salience among some who could not recall its name, there is not clear evidence that nomenclature is a major factor in the retention of knowledge of *Ficus opposita* as a bush medicine.

3. *Ngalangga* (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) was listed by nine participants (one more than *mayarranja*) but was slightly less salient (salience measure: 0.2847). Like *mayarranja*, participants listed it by various means: six named it with its indigenous name and three described it but did not name it. Indicators of the retention of salience of *ngalangga* include:

- Proximity to the community (several specimens grow in Ngukurr, including in some household yards)
- Perceived effectiveness.

That one-third of study participants listed *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* without naming it provides evidence that the salience of this medicine can be maintained to some degree independent of nomenclature.

4. *Grewia retusifolia* was listed by five people, four of whom named it as *guyiya* and one named it by a Kriol name, *dogbul*. However, the Kriol name *dogbul* is more widely known but this name refers to the plant’s fruit which are reminiscent of miniature dog’s testicles. Not all participants knew of the medicinal function of *Grewia retusifolia* but most knew the fruit. As such, participants who did know the plant’s medicinal use were more likely to refer to it as *guyiya* in order to differentiate the roots/medicine from the fruit. One informant explained:

(7.21) Wen mela luk, wen mela wandi dagat dagapat, when 1PLEXCL see when 1PLEXCL want:TR eat edible_part mela gulu dogbul, bat wen mela wandi gaji 1PLEXCL call:TR ‘dogball’ but when 1PLEXCL want:TR get:TR det plen – det rut pat – mela gulu guyiya. the plant the root part 1PLEXCL call:TR ‘guyiya’

When we see it, when we want to eat the edible part, we call it *dogbul*, but when we want to get the plant – the roots – we call it *guyiya*.

The likely reasons as to why *Grewia retusifolia*’s medicinal use retains a degree of salience include:

- Its specific application as a medicine to treat diarrhoea (perhaps useful to mothers of young children)
- Its abundance and proximity (growing in short walking distance from Ngukurr).
5. *Eucalyptus tectifica* was listed by seven respondents. Five labelled it *warlan* and two labelled it *warlantri* (a compound noun using *tri* 'tree'). Its salience appears to be attributable to it being recognised as an effective cure-all, with respondents reporting its application to treat varied ailments such as cancer, high blood pressure and to assist with quitting smoking. It grows in many places in the vicinity of Ngukurr making it quite physically salient.

6. *Pterocaulon serrulatum* is a small ubiquitous plant that grows in and around Ngukurr and throughout the region. Seven informants listed it in the free-listing exercise but only one could recall an Indigenous name for it (*jirrama*) and did so hesitantly. Four labelled it *smeligras*, two labelled it *smelilif* (one of whom also recalled its Marra name *jirrama*) and two provided only a description. This medicine retains salience because it is a distinctive plant that grows commonly in and around Ngukurr. Many respondents commented that the plant smells like Vicks (a commercially available over-the-counter Eucalyptus-based ointment/rub) and this feature appeared to be very salient to those who listed it. Given the assorted ways in which respondents listed this taxon, it can be argued that any salience it retains is not due to nomenclature but predicated more upon the plant's attributes, appearance and abundance.

7. The final taxon with a salience measure greater than 0.1 was *Buchanania obovata*, which was listed as *plam* 'plum' or *plamtri* 'plum tree' to all six who named it. None knew an Indigenous name for the species. It appears to retain salience because of its specific application of providing relief from toothache and its perceived effectiveness. This is particularly important given that professional Western dental care is rare in remote communities like Ngukurr.

As indicated by the above, a range of factors and attributes combine in complex ways to increase the salience of specific bush medicines among Kriol speakers. Nomenclature and the language of origin of names in many cases appear not to be of great influence. This is also evident when considering medicines that have not retained salience. Some taxa like *burduga* and *barnarr* (described in Chapter 6) are known to elders as highly effective and have an Indigenous name found in all substrates, but retain little salience among young Kriol speakers, indicating that efficacy and Indigenous nomenclature is not sufficient for maintenance of knowledge.
The main attribute that was clearly absent from young people's discussion of bush medicine, but which features in texts provided by senior Marra speakers, was ceremonial and totemic roles of various taxa. In particular, there were no mentions by young people of bush medicine taxa that feature in ceremonial song cycles, even though this was attested several times among Marra speakers, as described in §7.1. For at least some Marra speakers, song cycles used in traditional ceremonies that feature bush medicines are salient in their minds when discussing a particular taxon and presumably contributes to their overall salience. This appeared not to be a factor for the young people involved in this study.

7.2.9 **Concluding notes on the quantitative study of bush medicine knowledge and use among young people**

Young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr have been shown to maintain pre-contact traditional health beliefs relating to bush medicine, demonstrated by rhetoric in which they espouse its efficacy. However, the extent to which these beliefs translate into knowledge and practice has not been previously investigated. The quantitative study described here reveals that young people in Ngukurr are retaining a greater degree of knowledge about bush medicine and are applying that knowledge to a greater degree than was previously thought. The young people who informed this study listed and explained a variety of bush medicines, enumerating twenty-one taxa and providing details of their application and procurement. Many of them also described recent instances of using bush medicine to treat a range of ailments, challenging earlier claims of “little evidence that people were currently using bush medicine on a regular basis” (Senior 2003: 155). However, it should also be noted that differing and often depleted levels of knowledge and use among the informants were evident, with several informants demonstrating little knowledge. This study found that, as expected, young people are less knowledgeable than more senior residents in Ngukurr. It is inconclusive what role language shift from traditional languages to Kriol has played in the maintenance or loss of knowledge of bush medicines. This study identified a range of factors that cause certain taxa to retain salience and linguistic factors were found in many cases to be a secondary factor behind other factors such as proximity, personal experience, efficacy and physical properties of the plant.

7.3 **Lizards**

So far I have targeted bush medicine as a representative sub-domain within the larger sphere of ethnobiological knowledge, to exemplify the degree to which ethnobiological knowledge is being lost or maintained across the language shift boundary. In this section,
an additional domain is discussed, albeit in much briefer detail, to provide evidence as to whether the findings of the bush medicine study would be replicated when applied to other sub-domains within ethnobiology. In this section, the domain of lizards is considered, including discussion on the levels of taxonomic knowledge and associated cultural knowledge that have been demonstrated by groups of Marra speakers and Kriol speakers at different points in time.

7.3.1 LIZARD NOMENCLATURE AMONG MARRA SPEAKERS

The first documentation of lizard nomenclature in Marra was by Ken Hale who spent a short but productive time documenting the language in Borroloola in 1959 or 1960 with Dulu, a first-language Marra speaker (Hale 1959). Hale and Dulu covered all semantic domains in good, but not exhaustive, detail. The pair documented thirteen names within the domain of lizards, encompassing twelve taxa. Additionally, the semi-moiety to which each taxon belonged was noted in most cases.

In the 1970s, Jeffrey Heath spent considerably more time documenting Marra, working with a number of speakers, but in particular Manguji (Mack Riley) (Heath 1981: 6). Heath was able to compile a more exhaustive list of lizard taxa in Marra, listing 20 names. It appears that he also incorporated Hale’s data into his documentation making it unclear how many of the twenty names he lists were elicited during his own fieldwork. In addition to listed taxa, lizards feature in two texts in Heath’s published collection: one is a short text by Manguji on hunting goanna and blue-tongue lizards with fire, the other a long creation story relating to the Olive Python in which the Wardabirr (goanna) plays an important role. Table 7–10 lists the lizard taxa that were documented by Hale and Heath:

108 The Blue-tongued Lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides*) has two commonly occurring names: *lirrga* and *jayawurru*. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lizard name (Marra)</th>
<th>English name (if known)</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Hale (1959) including semi-moieties notes</th>
<th>Heath (1981)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gabilili</td>
<td>Tree Lizard</td>
<td>Cryptoblepharus sp.</td>
<td>yes, Mambali</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlarigarlarl</td>
<td>Skink</td>
<td>Ctenotus spp., Carlia spp.</td>
<td>yes, Murrungurn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalgunji</td>
<td>Frill-necked Lizard</td>
<td>Chlamydosaurus kingii</td>
<td>yes, Guyal</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabarla</td>
<td>Frill-necked Lizard</td>
<td>Chlamydosaurus kingii</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lirrga</td>
<td>Blue-tongued Lizard</td>
<td>Tiliqua scincoides</td>
<td>yes, Murrungurn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayawurrurr</td>
<td>Blue-tongued Lizard</td>
<td>Tiliqua scincoides</td>
<td>yes, Murrungurn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalmurrunya</td>
<td>Blue-tongued Lizard (female)</td>
<td>female of above</td>
<td>yes, Murrungurn</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>Wardabirr</td>
<td>Plains goanna</td>
<td>Varanus panoptes</td>
<td>yes, Burdal</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>Wadjurndu</td>
<td>Plains goanna</td>
<td>Varanus panoptes</td>
<td>yes, Burdal</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>Varanus panoptes</td>
<td>yes, Burdal</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>Varanus panoptes</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Mangardangarda</td>
<td>Water goanna</td>
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<td>yes</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mangarr</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garn.gulugulu</td>
<td>Ta-ta Lizard</td>
<td>Diporiphora bilineata</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaminji</td>
<td>Gecko</td>
<td>includes a number of species</td>
<td>yes, Mambali</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dabulun</td>
<td>Spiny-tailed Goanna</td>
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<td>Dawali</td>
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<td>Snake lizard</td>
<td>Lialis burtonis</td>
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<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngajarr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnawarra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Varanus scalaris</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-10: Marra lizard names documented by Heath and Hale

In 2010, I revisited lizard taxa with a group of five Marra speakers during a recording session in Numbulwar. The taxa were elicited via a free-listing exercise and then using visual stimuli from the Jawoyn Plants and Animals ethnobiology (Winydjorrodj et al. 2005). The taxa that the 2010 group listed are shown below:
On that occasion, the group enumerated eleven taxa, using twelve names – fewer than that Heath documented with Mangalji, but comparable to the thirteen names/twelve taxa that Dulu provided Hale. Interestingly, the group listed one taxon, galmarrarra – a type of large goanna – that had not been previously documented. But overall, the smaller set given in 2010 suggests that collective taxonomic knowledge may have diminished despite the group’s maintenance of fluency in Marra. It may be an instance of loss of knowledge occurring prior to processes of language shift being completed. Of course, it is not unexpected that a small group of the last speakers of a contemporarily rarely spoken language should begin to lose vocabulary or have difficulty recalling vocabulary and remembering taxa, but it serves as a cautionary reminder against simplistic statements that knowledge of a language is sufficient for the maintenance of cultural knowledge particular to a language group. Additionally, it is quite possible that a lack of experience or limited methods of eliciting ethnobiological names and information on my part contributed to the 2010 Marra group listing a reduced set of names.

### 7.3.2 Lizard nomenclature among Kriol speakers

Taxonomic nomenclature of lizards was also discussed with the fourteen young Kriol speakers involved in the quantitative bush medicine study. The discussion on lizards was less detailed than that of bush medicine: the fourteen participants completed a free-listing exercise following the bush medicine components of their interviews in which they were asked to list as many kinds of lizard as they could. The participants listed on average 4.4 taxa each, ranging from a low of zero (one participant) to a high of seven (three participants).
Collectively, the group listed ten taxa, using nineteen unique names and ten distinct descriptions to identify them. The nomenclature used by the Kriol speakers is tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common Kriol name used (English literal translation)</th>
<th>Other names or descriptions used</th>
<th>Marra name (Scientific name)</th>
<th>Times mentioned</th>
<th>Salience measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blenggid lisid (Blanket lizard)</td>
<td>• blenggid irriwul (literally 'blanket ear')&lt;br&gt;• mirriwa (from Wägilak)&lt;br&gt;• &quot;garri det bigiswan ting&quot; 'with a very large whats-it'&lt;br&gt;• frill neck lizard</td>
<td>Dahnunji (Chlamydosaurus kingii)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.3998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bludang (Blue tongue)</td>
<td>• lirrga&lt;br&gt;• dapalan (from Wägilak)</td>
<td>Lirrga, Jayawurru (Tiliqua scincoides)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.3357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dabulun</td>
<td>• &quot;det lisid wen thei digimat from det ston...&quot; 'that lizard that they take out from the stone'</td>
<td>Dabulun (Varanus acanthurus, V. baritji)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.2480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabai lisid (ta-ta lizard)</td>
<td>• weibing lisid 'waving lizard'&lt;br&gt;• garn.gululu, garn.gulugulu&lt;br&gt;• gabaigabai lisid 'waving lizard'&lt;br&gt;• &quot;lisid wen im oldei ran...&quot; 'lizard that always runs'&lt;br&gt;• nyumunyumu lisid 'humping lizard'</td>
<td>Garn.gulugulu (Diporiphora bilineata)</td>
<td>8 (at least one person intentionally avoided listing this taxon – see discussion below)</td>
<td>0.2077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwana (Goanna)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wardabirr (generic term) (Varanus panoptes)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;lisid weya thei galima la tri&quot; (&quot;lizard that climbs on trees&quot;)</td>
<td>• &quot;...hengraun la tri...&quot; 'hangs around in trees'&lt;br&gt;• &quot;...ran la grawun, galima la tri...&quot; 'runs on the ground, climbs on trees'</td>
<td>?Gabili (Cryptooblepharus sp.)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk sneik (Milk snake)</td>
<td>• &quot;...hadli luk im fut/am...&quot; 'hardly see his foot/arm'</td>
<td>Marlugundu (Lialis burtonis)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gekou (Gecko)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yaminji (various species)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bearded lizard</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not native to area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wada guwana (Water goanna)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mangarda-ngarda (Varanus mertensi, V. mitchelli)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7–12: Lizard taxa listed by Kriol speakers (2013 study) with frequency and salience measures

As shown in Table 7–12, there were five taxa mentioned by more than half of the study participants and the remaining five were listed by four or less. The five most salient lizards appear to be salient for two main reasons: (1) totemism and (2) social practice (related to abundance and physical proximity). *Blenggid lisid, bludang and guwana* are
well-known totems among many Kriol speakers (who refer to totems with the term *drimin*). Each belongs to a different semi-moiety: Blenggid *lisid* is Guyal, Bludang is Murrungurn and *Gawana* is a key totem for Burdal people. *Dabulun* and another small lizard described in various ways (but most commonly as *gabai *lisid* ‘ta-ta lizard’, *Diporiphora bilineata*) were also salient but this is likely due to their commonness and associated social practices or physical traits: *dabulun* are hunted and eaten regularly, including by children, and can be found living under rocks in close proximity to Ngukurr, while *Diporiphora bilineata* (Ta-ta Lizard) is common and has a distinctive trait of propping, then waving a leg in a circular motion. It has also gained an informal Kriol name that is related to a light taboo trait of the lizard that no-one wanted to discuss while being recorded. This taboo trait undoubtedly increases its salience among young people109, but also may have skewed its salience measure to be lower than it should be – at least one informant avoided listing the lizard during the recording. *Diporiphora bilineata* carries with it a folk belief among people in Ngukurr that it can run up and ‘mount’ a person’s leg. Hence a Kriol speaker’s off-the-record description of it as *jul-jul lisid* (amorous or horny lizard) and the one participant who described it during the interview as *nyumunyumu lisid* (thrusting or ‘humping’ lizard).

As with bush medicine, Kriol speakers referred to lizard taxa with names derived from various sources including some from substrate languages (often Marra), distinct Kriol names and English names. One of the most salient taxa, *dabulun*, was known only by its Marra name. This is an interesting example of a Marra-derived word maintaining considerable currency in Roper Kriol (as with many of the verbs described in Chapter 4) and unlike many other Marra-derived words in Kriol, *dabulun* has no clear cognates in neighbouring languages. It is listed in the Alawa and Nunggubuyu dictionaries but in both instances with the suggestion that it is a loan that has come into the language via Kriol. The other three most salient taxa were more commonly identified by a Kriol or English based name but were identified with an Indigenous name by at least one individual. Again, as with bush medicine, there were several occasions where Kriol speakers could not provide a name for a taxon but identified it via description only. Notably, the sixth most salient taxon (*Cryptoblepharus sp.*) was identified by the four people who mentioned it by description only: those who listed this species did so by describing its

109 As Allan and Burridge state, “Research in psychology, physiology and neurology corroborate that [forbidden words] are processed differently from ordinary language and are subject to more acute recognition and recall. Taboo language has a special place in our neural anatomy” (2006: 237).
distinctive habitat, identifying it as a tree-dwelling lizard. This indicates that a taxon can retain a considerable degree of salience, despite speakers not knowing a name for it.

7.3.3 LIZARD NOMENCLATURE – DISCUSSION

Taxonomic knowledge of lizards among Marra speakers and Kriol speakers has been examined – albeit in much less detail – by replicating aspects of the bush medicine study. The data from the study of lizard nomenclature does appear to reflect the more detailed data from the bush medicine study. As with bush medicine, Kriol speakers demonstrated less taxonomic knowledge of lizards than documented from Marra speakers, but Kriol speakers did retain a substantial portion of taxonomic knowledge of lizard and bush medicine taxa alike. Collectively, they described ten lizard taxa – comparable to the twelve documented by Hale in 1959 with Dulu and the eleven documented with the Marra speaking group in 2010, but significantly less than the total of twenty taxa compiled by Heath (who probably combined his own documentation with Hale’s).

As with bush medicine, the nomenclature Kriol speakers use to refer to lizard taxa is a combination of Indigenous names, English-based names, and distinctive Kriol names with English etymologies as well as using descriptive devices in lieu of names.

One of the main differences in lizard taxonomic knowledge between Marra speakers and Kriol speakers relates to varieties of goanna. All instances of Marra documentation provided at least four types of goanna. In Marra, goanna taxa are categorised under a hypernym, wardabirr, which covers several types: Heath lists four particular forms – wadjundu, barmunu, girraba and barlirri (1981: 487). Kriol speakers did not identify any of these subordinate taxa, nor was guwana ‘goanna’ salient to all: it was mentioned by eight of fourteen participants and was the fifth most salient taxon. Only one participant mentioned another type of goanna: wada guwana ‘water goanna’ (in Marra: mangardangarda).

The reduced knowledge among Kriol speakers of goanna nomenclature supports the idea that social practice, personal experience and physical proximity/local abundance have an important role in the salience of ethnobiological taxa: large goanna have all but disappeared from the Roper River area, which is widely attributed to the arrival of the cane toad (Rhinella marina) in 1995.\textsuperscript{110} Despite Kriol lacking hyponyms of goanna species that are found in Marra, guwana – the Kriol translation of the Marra hypernym,\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{110} However, Catling et al. (1999) argue that large goanna species were already in low numbers by the time cane toads arrived in the Roper River area.
wardabirr – retains considerable salience, attributable to its role as a key totem for the Burdal semi-moiety. Other highly salient lizard taxa to Kriol speakers are also key totems (blenggid lisid, bludang) and it should be noted that totems are not merely symbolic but have tangible manifestations in forms such as landmarks and physical and lyrical representations in ceremonial practices. The evidence from Hale and the 2010 group interview with Marra speakers confirms that semi-moiety and ceremonial connections are salient and core features of many key lizard taxa. If such cultural connections are being maintained among Kriol speakers also, then this would explain why rarely seen lizards such as guwana, blutang and blenggid lisid retain saliency.

The other most salient lizard taxa to Kriol speakers – dabulun and gabai lisid – are widely known not for totemic or ceremonial associations but because they are commonly found in and near Ngukurr and have associated social practices relating to them, as explained above. This recalls findings of the bush medicine survey indicating that taxa retained currency when they commonly grow in close proximity to Kriol speakers and have associated social practices relating to their procurement and application.

The final similarity between the bush medicine study and the briefer study of lizards relates to the salience of ceremonial song by Marra speakers when discussing ethnobiological taxa. Section 7.1.2 above describes how relevant verses of ceremonial songs were highly salient to Ginger Riley while describing the bush medicine gulban. Similarly in 2010, Gathawuy began impromptu singing about another bush medicine, mandarluurra, during a Marra documentation session. Likewise with lizards, during a group recording session in Numbulwar in 2010, the listing and discussion of lizard taxa in Marra prompted verses of ceremonial songs to be sung as an aside on three occasions. Henry Juluba Numamurdirdi quietly sang verses pertaining to dalngunji, jayawurru and wadjurndu during or following conversational discussion of the taxa. The textural feature of singing or even mentioning songs relating to ethnobiological taxa was not evidenced among Kriol speakers.

### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined in detail particular aspects of ethnobiological knowledge as they related to Marra speakers and to L1 Kriol speakers in Ngukurr aged 22–35. An analysis of narrative and textural features in two distinctive texts by Marra speakers about two specific bush medicines showed discursive features not attested by Kriol speakers. In particular, totemic and ceremonial themes were salient to Marra speakers, manifested by
distinctive features such as summarising creation stories and singing ceremonial
songcycles pertaining to a particular taxon.

While these features were not attested among L1 Kriol speakers, a quantitative study of
their knowledge and use of bush medicine found many to be more knowledgeable than
previously assumed and more regular users of bush medicines that previously assumed.
The underlying health belief systems of Kriol speakers have much in common with their
forebears who were native speakers of traditional languages. However, the study also
found that bush medicine knowledge of Kriol speakers in Ngukurr is less than that of
Marra speakers. The study identified a range of reasons as to why certain bush medicines
retain salience and linguistic factors appear to be less significant than other factors.

Finally, the domain of lizards was briefly surveyed to determine whether the findings of
research into bush medicine were indicative of other ethnobiological domains. The
demonstrated knowledge of lizards among Marra speakers and L1 Kriol speakers in
Ngukurr and patterns of knowledge maintenance and loss between the groups were
found to be similar to the findings of the bush medicine study.
8 CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have explored under-investigated assumptions about the ramifications of language loss, including what the loss of a language means for the maintenance of biological and ecological knowledge and for the ability to encode unique and cultural-specific concepts. I have shown that there are occasions where claims made about the degree of loss overlook a not-insignificant degree of transfer and maintenance of both linguistic and cultural practice being carried through to generations who do not speak their heritage language fluently. Examples of these aspects are reviewed further below.

An important initial point to make is that despite traditional languages falling into disuse there is no strong evidence that the value placed upon heritage languages in terms of social and personal identity marking is dissipating. Marra and Kriol speakers alike espouse the value of their heritage languages (i.e. traditional languages, not a creole) as markers of identity and as core aspects of their shared history. The following examples demonstrate this across three generations of one family, where the member of the oldest generation spoke Marra fluently, but the subsequent generations did not speak a heritage language. The oldest, Maureen Marranggulu Thompson, who features numerous times in this thesis and is profiled in §2.4.5.3, asserted:

(8.1) ngula wayi-nganinguy nana Marra, ngina
NEG[FUT] leave-1SG>3SG:tel;FUT the[M] Marra, 1SG:POSS
nana nanggaya, ngina n-daway, ngina!
the[M] that[M], 1SG:POSS N-language, 1SG:POSS
gana ngalgu-ninguy ngaba wul-agagurr,
REL 1SG>3PL-tell;FUT and PL-child[REDUP]
gana nangiyana gana gal-walajurra
REL subsequently REL grow-3PL:go;FUT
gana guwarda-walajana gana n-gaya n-daway, guda
REL listen-3PL:do;FUT REL N-that N-language, that’s_all
ngula wayi-nganinguy gana n-daway ngini
NEG[FUT] leave-1SG>3SG:tel;FUT REL N-language 1SG:POSS
I can’t leave behind the Marra language, that is mine, my language, mine! I’ll tell them as well as the children, who will grow up after me. They will listen to this language, that’s it. I won’t abandon my language.

[20111022MARRAmtNGld01a.wav,00:02:10]

The lyrics penned by her son – whose primary heritage was that of his father’s, Ngandi – in a popular music release (discussed in §2.5.3), indicates a similar appraisal of the importance of his heritage language, despite not being able to speak it:
I find it better to communicate in English now. But to put both languages together would have been much better. I still feel that way, a strong feeling wishing to speak my lingo, my own language. My father was from the Wulngarri clan and my mother was from across the river. ... You lose your identity if you lose your language. Your identity is connected to your land and your clan. And if your clan doesn’t have a language, then you feel like nothing. If you have a clan that has a language, then you are somebody. Being somebody is important. (Across The River, Yugul Band 2004)

Such sentiments are evident in younger generations. A member of Maureen’s grandchild’s generation aged in his twenties had, at the time of writing, been working at the Ngukurr Language Centre for over a year. As part of his duties he has been learning his primary heritage language Ngandi which now only has partial speakers. The value he places on his heritage language is clearly evident through content he puts on social media, such as:

![Facebook status from a language worker in Ngukurr, aged in his twenties (22/01/2015)](image)

The anecdotal evidence given above corresponds to a recent national survey finding that 98% of Indigenous respondents (N=288) agreed that “the use of traditional languages improves wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people” (Marmion, Obata, and Troy 2014: 30).

There are clear indications that the importance and prestige placed upon traditional languages like Marra is being maintained among Aboriginal people, regardless of level of fluency in the language. What does fluctuate is language competency, which creates a challenging situation where non-speakers of languages like Marra continue to value the language, but the lack of fluency is keenly felt, creating an obvious disparity between aspiration and reality. This can become a personal, family or community-wide issue with
negative impacts, creating feelings of loss, anger and disappointment (Bell 2010; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998).

In addition to language loss creating an environment that can foster negative feelings, in the Australian context there is little potential for redress. Opportunities for Aboriginal people to learn a heritage language they do not speak are few and accessing resources can be challenging in terms of both sourcing materials and being able to use them productively once obtained (Thieberger 1995). Funding programs that can assist are inadequate (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2012).

Marra people and other residents in Ngukurr are better off than most Aboriginal people in similar contexts, as the community operates a functional language centre through which they can access resources and training and contribute to and develop community-based language programs. The existence of this language centre is not a coincidence, it developed largely as a result of volunteer work I carried out during this study in an effort to maximise the community benefits this study could bring. The following section outlines contributions the study has made to language documentation and description, which is also only one component of the present research. The remaining sections of this concluding chapter review examples of cultural and linguistic loss, maintenance and innovations that Kriol speakers exhibit in comparison to that of their Marra forebears, followed by some final remarks on what ramifications this may have for those who live beyond the language shift boundary.

8.1 DOCUMENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

A key initial motivation underpinning this study has been my desire and that of Marra community members to work with the last remaining elderly speakers of Marra to create records of their lives and language. While the language had already been documented substantially by Hale (1959) and Heath (1981), some documentary gaps were evident, most notably in two aspects: lack of documentation from female speakers and little documentation of conversational data. Marra documentation carried out during this study has addressed these gaps, creating 26 hours of new Marra recordings, almost exclusively from female speakers and predominantly in conversational contexts. Marra documentation was enhanced by this study in other ways, such as transcribing and translating a series of previously unannotated narratives recorded by Ken Hale in 1959 from seven Marra men living in Borroloola at the time and being able to repatriate those and other archived recordings to relevant communities and families.
Marra documentation carried out during this study found Hale and Heath's work to be comprehensive and largely accurate. However, some small descriptive contributions were achieved by this study, mostly in regards to improving the lexical documentation of Marra, such as lexemes like the coverb *mangala* 'to join in/copy an activity' and the bush medicine *jirrama* described in some detail in this thesis but previously unattested in Marra documentation.

Regarding Kriol, the documentation of Kriol involved in this study was initially seen as less important or valuable, partly because of the language's reduced prestige and partly because it has been the focus of significantly more research (e.g. two doctoral theses in the previous decade: Munro 2004 and Nicholls 2009) and community-based work (most notably the *Kriol Baibul* translation, published in 2007) than languages like Marra. As the study progressed, it became clear that the young people involved in the documentation of Kriol were making a unique and valuable contribution. It was the first time a young cohort with little or no knowledge of traditional languages had contributed extensively to Kriol research. While they were expected to reflect aspects of linguistic and cultural loss, I had not expected their language use and knowledge to reveal so many examples of maintenance and innovation (summarised in §8.4 and §8.5 below). Additionally, they revealed numerous aspects of language change, such as new contractions like *animin* ‘1SG:NEG:PST’ and the reinterpretation of the reflexive/reciprocal and dyadic particle, previously documented as only *gija*, as *gijal*.

The opportunity to document Kriol spoken by young people with little knowledge of traditional languages also provides new perspectives on substrate influences. Features of their lexical knowledge attributable to substrate languages can be confidently apportioned to substrate influence rather than being potentially attributed to the effects of bilingualism. In examining non-English-derived lexemes used by Kriol speakers, it was determined that more lexemes, particularly verbs, are in current use than had been previously documented. Furthermore, compelling evidence emerged that lexical contributions from substrate languages are not equal but that Marra – and to a lesser extent other Marran languages, Warndarrang and Alawa – has contributed more lexical material to Kriol than other local languages. This evidence, along with historical evidence of an extended period of contact between L1 Marra speakers and emerging Kriol speakers in the early 1900s, reshapes what we know of substrate influences of Roper River Kriol (see also Dickson 2016) and calls for a rethink of the ‘level playing field’ approach that previous characterisations of substrate influence had tended towards.
If it is true that the degree to which substrate languages have influenced the lexicon of Kriol has been previously under-described and underestimated, this may be attributable to the difficulty researchers of creoles face when they speak the lexifying language as a first language. Inevitably, all such researchers acquire and analyse creoles with some unconscious bias towards the lexifier. This was certainly my experience. After being a confident and competent Kriol speaker for several years prior to this study, I was surprised to discover the number of substrate-derived lexemes that had remained previously unknown to me and that I would continue to learn additional non-English based lexemes with each visit to Ngukurr. I can only assume that researchers of Kriol, or any other creole, have been in a similar position when they speak the lexifying language as a first language. This study has been able to overcome this issue somewhat by (a) the researcher commencing the study with considerable fluency of Kriol and being well-known to the community, and (b) attempting to maximise community involvement in the study and incorporate clear community benefits into the research project.

8.2 Examples of Loss

It is of course true to say that in addition to the personal and communal feelings of loss that occur when a language falls out of use, unique linguistic features of any aspect of language, from phonology to discourse, can also vanish. This is widely accepted and is one of the factors behind linguistic efforts to document small languages like Marra.

The present study has described in some detail numerous examples of cultural and linguistic features used and known to Marra speakers but not used or known to Kriol speakers, including:

- the disappearance of the rich paradigms of often-suppletive kinterms that are marked for possession,
- Omaha-type skewing of some kinterms,
- a reduction in the numbers of kinterms and kin categories and the disappearance of distinct forms for dyadic kinterms,
- the loss of knowledge and nomenclature of several bush medicines, including some that are highly regarded by Marra speakers, such as barnarr and burduga,
- inability to recall names of biological taxa that Kriol speakers do still know about such as jirrama (*Pterocaulon serralatum*) called smeligras, smelilif or simply described by Kriol speakers who know it, and gabili (*Cryptobleharus sp.*) a lizard identified only by its habitat (lives in trees),
no longer closely associating common biological taxa with ceremonial songs and/or creation stories.

While numerous examples of loss have been identified in this study, others remain unexplored. The introduction to Chapter 6 mentioned other areas where similar degrees of loss would likely be evidenced among Kriol speakers living in Ngukurr today: knowledge of mangrove and coastal land ecosystems, spear making and hunting with spears, traditional practices relating to fire (e.g. lighting fires, use in hunting), topographic nomenclature and knowledge, and water transport and navigation, including making and using canoes. Another area mentioned was saltwater fishing and hunting: for example, dugong hunting, names of dugong types and saltwater fish species. While documenting Marra during this study, gaps in this domain were obvious. Marra elders and partial speakers are noticeably proud of Marra nomenclature relating to dugong types and would happily indulge in documenting six categories of dugong in Marra, each with their own monomorphemic name:

- *yibinybiji* ‘young male dugong’
- *mayili* ‘bull dugong (large male)’
- *gurruwiji* ‘female dugong’
- *bayawiji* ‘male dugong’
- *miramba* ‘young female’
- *jawurru* ‘calf’.

This nomenclature does not exist in Kriol. All dugong are referred to only as *jugong*, though obviously, modifiers can be added to distinguish various categories. Marra people I worked with who had some experience with eating or hunting dugong find this nomenclature fascinating but it seems to be of little use to young people in Ngukurr and has disappeared.

But what role does language shift itself have in the loss of such knowledge? As discussed in §8.5 below, control factors that could provide clearer answers to this are difficult to manage. Loss of linguistic and cultural knowledge are intrinsically tied to historical forces, social forces and resultant changes in language socialisation. Further complicating the situation are examples where loss of knowledge precedes language shift, such as the Marra speakers involved in this study struggling to recall dyadic kinterms, or no longer recalling the name or use of *Excoecaria parvifolia*, or not being able to name as many lizard taxa as their immediate ancestors could. And of course, such shifts can occur when language shift is not evident. For example, among Murrinh Patha speakers in Wadeye,
some innovations similar to those I have reported among Kriol speakers are also found, such as the adoption of more ‘peer-focused’ kinterms. Young Murrinh Patha speakers have adopted the Gurindji kinterm warri, and applied it to classificatory fathers (i.e. peers) reserving the English-derived dedi or the Murrinh Patha yile for consanguineal kin in the father category (Mansfield 2014: 39). This is similar to the adoption of the kinterm gudi, reported in Chapter 6. Innovations like this are occurring among Murrinh Patha speakers despite the ongoing transmission of the language.

8.3 EXAMPLES OF MAINTENANCE

Each domain considered in this study has revealed instances where Kriol speakers are retaining linguistic and cultural practices of Marra-speaking forebears. In some cases specific examples of maintenance have not been previously documented. Chapter 3 showed that Marra and other substrate languages pervade the lexicon of Kriol in more than just nominal word classes. Tag questions and interjections are particularly fertile ground for non-English-derived lexemes, but Marra also resonates in word classes less typically open to borrowings such as interrogatives, where the Marra and Warndarrang derived generic ‘what’s-up’ type interrogative, ngarni, persists. Chapter 4 documented sixty non-English-derived verbs known to most or all Kriol speakers. More than half of those verbs were not previously documented in Kriol. In most cases the presence of the verbs in Kriol could be attributed solely or partially to the Marra language and its speakers. This is despite most Kriol speakers having little contact with Marra spoken communicatively and having little awareness of the verbs’ etyomologies. In some word classes where English-derived forms predominate – such as the pronominal system, which is entirely derived from English forms, and kinterms, which are predominantly English-derived – the categories encoded are more closely aligned with categories used by Marra speakers than the categories that the English etymons encode. Chapter 5 demonstrated that the overall system of person reference – specifically, the prevalent use of kinterms in achieving person reference – as well as kinship-derived politeness strategies were more closely aligned with that of Marra speakers than English speakers.

In terms of bush medicine, Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrated that Kriol speakers knew more taxa and prescribed and used bush medicine more than had been previously thought. Even with linguistic aspects that were not attested in Kriol, parallels can sometimes be found. For example, the Kriol kinship system does not exhibit skewing of kinterms as Marra does. Avery (2002) postulates that skewing in Marra allows semi-moieties membership and associated relationships (e.g. junggayi, mingirringgi and darnlyin) to
retain salience in the kinterm system. I postulate that the increased use of self-reciprocal kinterms among Kriol speakers serves a similar function.

8.4 EXAMPLES OF INNOVATION

In some cases, Kriol speakers were found to be making changes in their language that reflected both cultural and linguistic innovation. Linguistic innovations are occurring in a new context: the linguistic ecology of new generations of Kriol speakers is one where Kriol is the only major input (i.e. parental and older generations are all speaking Kriol too). Older generations in Ngukurr would have innovated upon their variety of Kriol while having considerably more contact with substrate languages, but this language ecology does not exist anymore. To repeat the metaphor used in Chapter 3, the anchor of traditional language input has been raised and young generations of Kriol speakers in Ngukurr are sailing freely, innovating almost exclusively by drawing upon the Kriol of previous generations.

This study has identified a small number of innovations Kriol speakers are making, in both language use and the knowledge and application of knowledge they describe. Among the verbs described in Chapter 4 some innovations were evident, such as the application of substrate-derived verbs into new areas like birrij which historically applied to dodging spears but now readily refers to footballers swiftly evading defenders on the opposing team. The Marra coverb gubari’ ‘scavenge’ has become particularly versatile in Kriol, even occurring in nominalised form gubarlna ‘scavenger’, which features nominalising morphology that is yet to be explained. Kriol speakers are particularly playful when it comes to kin terminology, truncating forms such as gagu to gugsi ‘MoMo, MoMoBr (self-reciprocal)’ and gabarani to gaps ‘MoBr (self-reciprocal)’ and adopting non-kinterms from English and applying them to specific kin categories e.g. fren ‘sibling-in-law’ (from friend) and blouk ‘brother’ (from bloke). The most striking innovation is the adoption of two “sympathy response cries” (Garde 1996), gudi ‘Fa (self-reciprocal)’ and gabarani (mentioned above), from Gunwinyguan languages outside the immediate area and introducing them as basic, self-reciprocal kinterms in Kriol. These recent adoptions create a new system whereby Kriol speakers can now refer to all peers (i.e. classificatory kin) by a self-reciprocal kinterm.

The domain of bush medicine and ethnobiology in general was expected to highlight diminishing linguistic and cultural practices across the language shift boundary, yet some instances of innovation were evident in that domain too. For one young mother, the taxon Grewia retusifolia could be lexically distinguished according to its medicinal
function (and hence called guyiya) or whether the fruit were being snacked upon (then called dogbul). In terms of usage, bush medicines were on occasion being applied to new contexts, such as the reported use of dumbuyumbu (Santalum lanceolatum) to treat hangover or to improve performance on the football field.

8.5 Historical Factors and Language Socialisation

Underlying the examples of loss, maintenance and innovation associated with the shift from Marra to Kriol are enormous social and historical forces that have impacted upon Marra people's lives. The swift and significant social changes that have taken place have meant it was not possible in this study to control a key variable between the two groups (i.e. Marra speakers and Kriol speakers) involved in language shift: life experience. There simply are not Kriol speakers who have the same life experiences as Marra speakers.

Chapter 2 depicts the history of the Marra people, particularly since the arrival of Munanga 'Europeans' in the 1800s. Key to the development of Kriol, which has now almost completely replaced Marra as the language used by Marra people, was the establishment of the Roper River Mission. It provided a suitable environment that allowed for an existing pidgin to develop further into a creole, used communicatively by the generations whose lives centred on the mission. For the first four or so decades of the mission's history, some Marra people remained on their land, subsisting and using their language communicatively, a fact that had escaped the attention of linguists who have previously researched Kriol. The historical review of language shift and the biographies of the last fully fluent speakers of Marra suggest that a delineation can be made between those who grew up 'in the bush' and those who grew up in the mission. It seems that no-one who grew up primarily at the mission ever fully acquired Marra. A similar situation is reported for another Gulf of Carpentaria language, Kayardild, where "the fate of the language was sealed in the 1940s when missionaries evacuated the entire population of [Kayardild-speaking] Bentinck Islanders from their ancestral territories, relocating them to the mission on Mornington Island" (Evans 2010: xv). A few hundred kilometres across the Gulf of Carpentaria, Marra people – strangers to the Kaiadilt – were concurrently involved in a process that, despite being less forceful, had the same effect.

Language acquisition and socialisation processes that have produced L1 Kriol-speaking Marra people have occurred off-country. For Marra speakers, their language acquisition and socialisation is a product of being on-country. This fundamental difference cannot be bridged by this study. So how have some cultural and linguistic aspects been maintained? The examples of cultural and linguistic maintenance described in this study are
attributable to language socialisation practices that involve tacit cultural knowledge. For example, young Kriol speakers continue to be socialised into complex kinship networks, to use kinterms in preference to names and to observe the relationships they categorise (with associated ‘proper’ behaviours) as core aspects of everyday interaction and social life. Many of the verbs described in Chapter 4 can be attributed to tacit cultural knowledge transmitted as part of language socialisation: such as, how fighting siblings or relatives moi ‘threaten’ or nyal ‘join in a fight’, the demand-sharing connoted by ngaja ‘ask for something’, the quietening of ngayap or the hyperactive collective bombardment of children upon a caregiver doing something they want to be a part of, encoded by the verb mangala.

Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez summarise the role that observing “the routine and the everyday” has in understanding language socialisation and point out that “much of the cultural knowledge that underlies everyday interaction is tacit, i.e., part of practical consciousness but not discursive consciousness and hence not ordinarily reflected upon or spoken about” (2002: 343). In this study we have seen many cases where tacit cultural knowledge is being transmitted, and often along with it, substrate lexical items that relate to that knowledge. More rarely transmitted is the cultural knowledge that Marra speakers find it easy to be explicit about: cultural knowledge that can be documented in, for example, a collection of texts accompanying a descriptive grammar. This includes cultural phenomena that were central to Marra speakers’ lives when they lived on country: the range of bush foods they collected and consumed, dugong hunting and sea-faring, and the intricate details of Dreaming stories that relate to sites they regularly see and visit. But such cultural phenomena, like any other, also have tacit knowledge attached to each aspect, aspects that would not have been easily made explicit, but were probably quietly abandoned when lifestyles and socialisation process changed to a new location with new regulations. This is a major part of the loss associated with language and cultural shifts, but it is one that disappears without most (if any) people being aware of it.

8.6 AVOIDING DEFICIT DISCOURSE

If the loss of cultural knowledge is most salient when it refers to explicit knowledge, then this seems to also manifest in broader rhetoric surrounding language endangerment that focuses on loss that occurs when language systems cease to be used. A parallel is often made between endangered languages and biological endangerment (e.g. Maffi 2005; Harmon 1996): both have rates of endangerment that have rapidly increased over the past century and correlations between biological diversity and linguistic diversity have
been demonstrated. However, a key difference exists. When a biological species becomes extinct it disappears forever, apart from the records that humans have kept of it. When a people’s language falls out of use, we similarly have records of the language’s existence (in most circumstances) but the community and its people do not cease to exist. This study has shown that, at least in the case of Marra people and Roper Kriol speakers, despite a considerable degree of loss, a not insignificant degree of maintenance occurs across the language shift boundary. Maintenance is not just evidenced in the lexicon, but also reflected in the continuation of many social and cultural practices – often tacit – that were particular to Marra people and speakers of other neighbouring languages.

With the discourse of loss being prevalent in rhetoric surrounding language loss and endangerment, there is a risk of fostering a discourse of deficit that could affect the descendants of those who fluently spoke languages no longer fully spoken. "Deficit discourse" in the Australian context describes "a mode of thinking, identifiable in language use, which frames Aboriginal identity in a narrative of negativity, deficiency and disempowerment" (Fforde et al. 2013). In this study, I have shown that Kriol speaking descendants of Marra speakers are not vacuums devoid of linguistic and cultural knowledge held by their ancestors. There is potential social harm if they are depicted as such.

In 2014, I was fortunate enough to be engaged by the Ngukurr Language Centre to train and recruit young language workers. A few brave young people nominated themselves. As described above, heritage languages retain great significance for such young people but they commonly hold deep-seated feelings of personal loss and grief resulting from an acute awareness that they do not know the languages of their ancestors (see Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998 for an excellent discussion of such issues in a North American context). These issues arose early in the training workshop I was facilitating and I was able to begin to address them by (a) explaining the historical circumstances that have led to their situation and (b) demonstrating that in fact all has not been lost but that their Kriol contains numerous lexemes reflecting ‘lost’ languages and underpinning cultural knowledge that is deeply rooted in their heritage languages. The explanation appeared to hold sway and the young people completed the workshop and approached the challenging task of learning about their languages and doing language work with a little less weight on their shoulders. On reflection, I realised that the English-only, Western-centric education provided in communities like Ngukurr is not capable of giving such information to the community’s youth. As linguists, we are in a position to demonstrate to those caught on other side of language shift that all has not been lost, and to use that as
a stepping stone for addressing feelings of deficiency and lay a foundation for such people to relearn their heritage languages if so desired. Conversely, it is also important that where possible, in considering the loss and endangerment that is currently affecting so many small communities, we are mindful to avoid discourses of deficit that may inadvertently contribute to feelings of loss already felt by those living beyond language shift.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – MAUREEN THOMPSON “I WON’T ABANDON MY LANGUAGE”

This recording was made on October 22, 2011 at Farrah’s Crossing, a location on the Wilton River around 30km west of Ngukurr. It was made during a day trip while Maureen’s family and others were enjoying the river. Maureen, unable to participate in physical activities because of her old age, initiated a short recording session to contribute to the Marra documentation project that accompanied the present study. In this recording, she discusses language policy and ideology and conveys her determination and passion for the maintenance of her language.

1. *gana n-daway ngarl-ngamanji nya-Marra-yani*
   - REL N-language speak-1SG:do;PRS N[OBL]-Marra-ABL
   - I’m speaking the language from Marra (country)

2. *ngula wayi-nganinguy nana Marra*
   - I won’t give up the Marra language

3. *wili munamunanga gana nanbili-yi*
   - the[PL;OBL] European[REDUP] REL 3PL>1SG-tell;PST;PUNCT
   - “mingi wayi-wuya gana n-gaya n-daway”
   - now leave-2SG:tel;IMP REL N-that N-language
   - Europeans told me “leave the language behind now”

4. *gana nga-ma...*
   - REL 1SG-do:PST;PUNCT
   - I did/said...

5. “*ngula wayi-nganinguy nana Marra, ngina*
   - nana nanggaya, ngina n-daway, ngina!”
   - the[M] that[M], 1SG:POSS N-language, 1SG:POSS
   - “I can’t leave behind the Marra language, that is mine, my language, mine!”

6. *gana ngalgu-ninguy ngaba wul-agagurr,*
   - REL 1SG>3PL-tell;FUT and PL-child[REDUP]
   - I’ll tell them as well as the children,

7. *gana nangiyana gana gal-walajurra*
   - REL subsequently REL grow-3PL:go;FUT
   - who will grow up after me

8. *gana guwarda-walajana gana n-gaya n-daway, guda*
   - REL listen-3PL:do;FUT REL N-that N-language, that’s_all
   - They will listen to this language, that’s it.
9 ngula wayi-nganinguy gana n-daway ngini
NEG[FUT] leave-1SG>3SG;tel;FUT REL N-language 1SG:POSS
I won't abandon my language

10 wala wul-missionary gana nanbili-yi "wayi-wuya-
the[PL] PL-missionary REL 3PL>1SG-tel;PST;PUNCT leave-2SG;tel;IMP
ganana- nana nanggaya n-daway mingi niya"
REL the[M] that[M] N-language now 2SG;POSS
The missionaries, they told me, "Leave it- that language of yours now".

11 "wayi-wuya nana Marra!"
leave-2SG;tel;IMP the[M] Marra
"Abandon the Marra (language)!"

12 "ngula ngarl-imi"
NEG[FUT] speak-2SG>3SG;do;FUT
"Don't speak it!"

13 ngarl-awujanganirlna
speak-1PLINCL;tel;PRS;REFL
We spoke to each other.

14 nana ngalurrru nga-janyi, ngana n-gajirri nga-janyi
I was telling my father, I was telling my mother,

15 gana nanbirri-janyi
REL 3DU>1SG-tell:PST;CONT
and they told me,

16 "ngula wayi-, ngula wayi-wuya gana
NEG[FUT] leave-, NEG[FUT] leave-2SG;tel;IMP REL
n-gaya n-dan- n-daway"
N-that N-xx N-language
"Don't leave- don't abandon that language".

17 guda
that's all
That's all.
APPENDIX 2 – MAUREEN THOMPSON “DIRRINGGIRL-DIRRINGGIRL”

This recording was made on October 22, 2011 at Farrah’s Crossing, a location on the Wilton River around 30km west of Ngukurr (the same day as the text presented in Appendix 1 was recorded). This was an impromptu story inspired by Maureen spotting dirringgirl-dirringgirl (Crinum uniflorum) – a bush medicine plant – growing nearby.

This text is noteworthy from a discourse perspective and discussed in some detail in §7.1.1. Readers may note the variety of topics that the subject matter generates: Maureen begins with a fairly standard description of the use of a traditional medicine, leading her to refer to a range of subjects in the text, including kin, country, land tenure and aspects of a creation story.

1  Gana nyiyin-gugi nana nanggaya waitanyin: dirringgirl-dirringgirl
   REL name-3SG;POSS the[M] that[M] white_onion [plant name]
The name of the white onion (is) dirringgirl-dirringgirl.

2  (2.0) nya-Marra-yani,
   N[OBL]-Marra-ABL
   In Marra.

3  GD: Nginjani?
   what
   What (is it)?

4  Dirringgirl-dirringgirl.
   [plant name]
   Dirringgirl-dirringgirl.

5  Nana nanggaya bay-ajurlu nanggaya wuna.
   the[M] that[M] stand-3SG::(jinji);PRS[3] that[M] 2SG[IMP]:see;IMP
   That one standing up there, look.

6  Wurruga-gayi nanggaya gana n-birlal
   three that[M] REL N-lily_leaf
   (It has) three leaves.

7  Ninya ninya bay-ajurlu
   this[M] this[M] stand-3SG::(jinji);PRS[3]
   This one, this one, standing up.

8  na-jiji-ni nana nanggaya, nana Juluba gana
   M[OBL]-skin_sore-PURP the[M] that[M] the[M] [Personal name] REL
   ngabar-umindini nana jiji gana wugaluni
   be_incapacitated-3SG:do;PST;CONT the[M] skin_sore REL 3SG:have;PST;CONT
   ginyindi
   this_way
   That (plant) is for sores, when Juluba was sick, when he had skin sores here,
yimbirri wayburri.

north[ALL] south[ALL]
in every direction (i.e. all over him).

yani ya-gajirri (3.8)
the[F;OBL] F[OBL]-mother[1]
my mother

imin ol-laik (1.4) warrj-guningarli,
3SG:PSTHABIT- like get-3SG>3SG:(-ningarli);PST;CONT
she would- like... she would get it,

wur-wanyi nani na-biligan-yurr
put-3SG>3SG:(-ganyi);PST;PUNCT the[M;OBL] M[OBL]-billycan-ALL
she put it into a billycan,

dardard gujanyi bigana na nana nanggaya jiji
cook-3SG>3SG:(-janyi);PST;CONT because M- the[M] that[M] skin_sore
ohana wuguluni.
REL 3SG:have;PST;CONT
he was feverish because of the skin sores that he had.

Nana dirringgirl-dirringgirl na-jiji-ni (5.4)
the[M] dirringgirl-dirringgirl M[OBL]-skin_sore-PURP
Dirringgirl-dirringgirl is for skin sores,

warrnggu yumarr-wuma.
until good-3SG:do;PST;PUNCT
until it is becomes good.

Mingi nanggaya guymi gana wa-wurlu
That’s the one who is living/staying in the north

gaya gana marn.garn nad-gunbu Wamunggu
there REL road run-3SG:(-gunbuni);PST;PUNCT [Place name]
there where he was born, (at) Wamunggu (lit: ‘there where the Wamunggu path
ra’n or ‘he ran on the Wamunggu path’)

marn.garn nad-gunbu Wamunggu,
road run-3SG:(-gunbuni);PST;PUNCT [Place name]
he was born at Wamunggu

nana Wamunggu jawuru... radburr.
the[M] [Place name] 3SG:POSS country/home
Wamunggu is his ... traditional country

ola wani—— ola (wurrumanajbama).... wumanamajbarr- mob.
the[PL] what- the ?? [clan name??]-COLL
The what- the ?? group
laik Bobby mob. Ola kantri bla alabat- gen! like Bobby-COLL the[PL] land POSS 3PL, oops! as in Bobby's clan. Their country- oops!

jawurr, biliwu bangarra 3SG;POSS 3PL;POSS country his, their country

ola wumanamajbarr-mob gaya gana walanjanyi the[PL] [clan name?] COLL there REL 3PL;sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] guda, biliwu n-radburr gana n-gaya that's_all 3PL;POSS N-country/home REL N-there The Nunggumajbarr(?) group, they were staying there, it's their country there.

Ngarni ngula wala-yurra-, warri-walayurra gaya. so NEG 3PL-go;PST;IRR return-3PL-go;PST;IRR there They don't go- they don't go back there.

Gaya nani na-garrimarla gana wubarrunyi warugu there the[M;OBL] M[OBL]-taipan REL 3SG>3SG:lay_egg;PST;CONT egg There, the taipan was laying eggs.

wuluwulunga gaya, Wamunggu. in_the_middle there, [Place name] there in the middle, at Wamunggu.

Warra wurr-garrimarla. (4.5) Guda. the[DU] DU-taipan that's_all The two taipans. That's all.

nana nanggaya… nanggaya wirrinya nana nanggaya gabu the[M] that[M] the[DU;OBL] the[M] that[M] hey jaw-umi dig-2SG[IMP]:do;IMP That… that, hey you two dig that up.

nana shabul marluy gana jaw-nawumi, the[M] shovel nothing REL dig-1PLINCL>3SG:do;FUT;PUNCT We don't have a shovel to dig it with.

nawu-naji nana nanggaya wumbul 1PLINCL>3SG-see:PST;PUNCT the[M] that[M] what's_it We saw that whatchamacallit.

laika… mani anyin gana, gana wa-wurlu nana nanggaya like like onion REL, REL 3SG-sit;PR[3] the[M] that[M] It's like an onion, that one sitting there.

Nana dirringgirl-dirringgirl warr-iwiganjiyi the[M] dirringgirl-dirringgirl call-1PLEXCL>3SG:(-ganji);PRS We call it "dirringgirl-dirringgirl".
It made Juluba well.

The Nunggumajbarr group. That's all.

I was talking about the-

(If) you have – whatchamacallit – ringworm here.

Like, like an oyster - that is a good medicine for it.

Like, like an oyster - that is a good medicine for it.

That’s it.
APPENDIX 3 – BETTY AND FREDA’S MARRA BUSH MEDICINE WRITTEN TEXTS

The following texts were written by Betty Roberts and Freda Roberts in early 2007. They were composed while they were assisting the Ngukurr Language Centre to develop educational materials on bush medicine to be used in Ngukurr school’s language revitalisation program and in the general community of Ngukurr. Betty and Freda wrote the texts seemingly with little help. Given that they were composed independently by Marra elders, the texts provide a window into how Marra speakers conceive and complete a task such as composing ethnobotanical texts and how they express the knowledge they hold. The texts are unique and interesting, not only as monolingual Marra texts (some glossing was provided in one text but there were no free translations into Kriol or English) but more so because it is rare for such an endangered Aboriginal language to be documented by fluent informants using text as the primary medium (rather than audio or video).

Betty and Freda wrote the texts on paper and they were subsequently typed by a language worker (exactly who is not known). It is not clear exactly how much assistance Betty and Freda received while composing the texts but it appears they received little. They are likely to have consulted Heath’s Marra dictionary and received some help with spelling, but it is clear that the text composition is essentially their own work, evidenced by some texts still displaying idiosyncratic spelling and other orthographic irregularities. Faithful reproductions of Betty and Freda’s texts are given in the shaded boxes. Underneath, each text is reproduced but in standard Marra orthography and with glossing and an approximate translation provided by Greg Dickson.

1. Dugul

Marra

| Nana ninya dugul wala |
| Wul-malbualbu lib-balayurranyi |
| Yumarr nya-lib-manjarri marringaya |

**Dugul** (*Acacia holosericea?*)

_Nana ninya dugul, wala wul-malbualbu lib-balayurranyi._


_Yumarr nya-lib-manjarr-i marringaya _

good N[OBL]-bathe-NMLZ-PURP good

This is ‘dugul’. The old men would bathe (with it). It’s good for washing/bathing.
2. Garnamurru

Marra

Nana ninya Garnamurru na-warlan-yurr gana wa-wulu
Galimba na-bambuja-yurr, na-gulajarda-yurr, ganawarwulu na-galiwan-yurr.
Gana niwi-rdlingyi yaja niwijujujunguni na-garnamurru ni nyanay- yani gana
Niwi-minajini gana guldil diwdiw-warlindu.
Yumarr nana ninya garnamurru na-ngundul ngundul-ni.

Garnamurru - Long-nosed honey bee (Trigona sp.)

Nana ninya garnamurru, na-warlan-yurr gana wa-wulu
the[M] this[M] boy_sugarbag M[OBL]-tree_sp.-LOC REL 3SG:sit;PRS
M[OBL]-tree_sp.-LOC M[OBL]-tree_sp.-LOC REL 3SG:sit;PRS
na-garliwan-yurr. Gana niwi-rdlingyi yaja-niwijujujunguni
M[OBL]-paperbark_sp.-LOC REL 1PLEXCL-go;PRS look_for-1PLEXCL>3SG:(-jujunyi);PRS
nyanay-yani gana niwi-minajini gana gunndil
long_way-ABL REL 1PLEXCL>3SG-see;PRS REL fly
na-garnamurru-ni diw-diwarlindu
M[OBL]-boy_sugarbag-PURP fly-fly-3SG:go;PRS
Yumarr nana ninya garnamurru na-ngundulngundul-ni
good the[M] this[M] bee_sp. M[OBL]-throat-PURP

This is 'garnamurru', it lives in the warlan tree and in the bambuja (stringybark) tree, the
gurrjarda (a Eucalypt species) tree and in the garliwan (a type of paperbark) tree. We go
and look for it. From far away, we see the bees flying for garnamurru. Garnamurru is
good for your throat.

3. Gawurruwa

Marra

Nana ninya Gawurruwa
Nana ninya ngularwarr war-wulu na-nalwurr
Jaw-niwinjindini galiwanyi budbud-niwanji galimba dud-nawiyagay
Nana bargarr galimba ngalbun. Yumarr nya- nganja-ni.
Nana ninya yana dud-nawiyagay
Na-mudju tree, warlan tree, gum tree.
Nyarrba-nyarrba bindi yumarr na- nganja-ni,
Ngaba na-balba-yurr
Nana bagarr – wugi yumarr bindi.

Gawurruwa - Ground sugarbag

Nana ninya gawurruwa,
the[M] this[M] ground_sugarbag
Nana ninya ngulawarr wa-wurlu na-nalwurr
the[M] this[M] sugarbag 3SG:sit;PRS M[OBL]-ground
Jaw-niwinjindini garl-iwanyi
dig-1PLEXCL:do;PST;CONT take_out-1PLEXCL:(-ganji);PST;PUNCT
bud-bud-niwanji galimba dud-niwiyangay
lift-lift-1PLEXCL:(-ganji);PST;CONT and find-1PLEXCL;3SG:(-jagayagarli);FUT
nana bagarr galimba ngalbun.
the[M] honey and bee_eggs
Yumarr nya-nganja-ni nana ninyayana
good N[OBL]-belly-PURP the[M] this_kind
dud-niwiyangay na-mudju treex warlan tree gum tree,
find-1PLEXCL;3SG:(-jagayagarli);FUT M[OBL]-coolibah coolibah tree gum tree
Nyarrbayarrba bindi yumarr nya-nganja-ni,
sweet properly good M[OBL]-belly-PURP
ngaba na-balba-yurr nana bagarr-wugi yumarr bindi
and M[OBL]-river-LOC the[M] honey-3SG[POSS] good properly

This is gawurrwa (ground sugarbag). This sugarbag lives in the ground. We would dig, take it out, lift it up and then we find the honey and egg parts. This kind of thing is good for your belly (digestion). We find it in mudju trees, warlan tree (both types of coolibah) and eucalypts. It’s very sweet and good for your belly (digestion). And at the river (meaning?), the honey is very good.

4. Mudju

Marra
Nana ninya yana
(this kainduva)
galgalarra bindi nana ninyayana dir dir nyagalmanjarri
(strongwan)(brabli) (hardwan)(bla katimbat)
Nana mudju garlalindu na-balba yilijili
((it grows) (along the riverside)
Nana nyardin gugi yumarr nana ninyayana mudju. nyalibmanjarri
(this one) (skin bla im) (gudwan) (bla bogi)

Mudju - River coolibah (Eucalyptus microtheca)

Nana ninyayana, galgalgarra bindi,
the[M] this_kind strong properly
nana ninyayana dir-dir nya-gal-manjarri
the[M] this_kind hard N[OBL]-cut_down-NMLZ-PURP
Nana mudju gal-arlin_du na-balba yilijili
the[M] coolibah_tree grow-3SG:go;PRS M[OBL]-river side
Nana nyardin-gugi yumarr nana ninyayana mudju,
the[M] skin-3SG:POSS good the[M] this_kind coolibah_tree
nya-lib-manjarri.
N[OBL]-bathe-NMLZ-PURP

This type is very strong, this kind is hard to cut down. The coolibah tree grows along rivers. Its bark is good – of this kind of tree – for bathing.
Gulban – Ti-tree (*Melaleuca stenostachya*)

*Nana ninya gulban.*

This is *gulban* (ti-tree). This type is really good medicine, for mucus and flu. We wash with this type. They bathe with its leaves. and it lives in blacksoil/plain country. Its leaves are good, they are just like medicine. It’s good for headache, it’s good for (flavouring) meat and fish.

Yurrmuru – Green plum (*Buchanania obovata*)

*Nana ninya yurrmuru gal-arlindu.*

This type grows in blacksoil/plain country.
This is *yurrmuru* (green plum). It grows on the tops of hills and it grows on flat country along the side. We would always go there to Manugani for green plum, we would always go to Larrbayanj for green plum.

**Warlan**

*(Eucalyptus tectifica)*

This is *warlan*. This type grows in the hills. We drink the (prepared) bark of this for toothache, that's all. And headache. We wash (with it) in the afternoons and mornings. (In) your mouth (i.e. mouthwash) until your teeth are good.
8. Bambuja
Marra
Nana ninya yana bambuja gana
warr- iwiganji nya-marra- yani, wili-malbulanbu
warrj-biliyagalgi ganan ngardugu –gugi
jarag-biliyunyi ngardugu ngaba
jarag-biliyunyi muwarda manimigi
na-warlja-ni ngaba yundunyuga-

Bambuja – Stringybark (Eucalyptus tetradonta)

Nana ninya yana bambuja gana
warr- iwiganji nya-marra- yani, wili-malbulanbu
warrj-biliyagalgi ganan ngardugu –gugi
jarag-biliyunyi ngardugu ngaba
jarag-biliyunyi muwarda manimigi
na-warlja-ni ngaba yundunyuga-

This type of thing, we call bambuja in Marra. The old men would get it and make their ropes and they would make canoes intended for (hunting) dugong and sea turtle.

9. Jalma
Marra
Nana ninya jalma
Nana ninya jalma gal-arlindu na-gulma yurr.
Gana niwi-rliindiyi yaja-niwijijju nanya yani
Niwi-jinjiyinji nana ninya yana gurlarl-awuju jalji
Galimba dad-nawuningu yu- jiwa-yurr
Galimba nawi

Jalma – Yam species (Dioscorea sp.)

Nana ninya jalma.
the[M] this[M] yam_sp.
Nana ninya jalma gal-arlindu na-gulma yurr.
the[M] this[M] yam_sp grow-3SG:go;PRS M-creek-LOC
gana niwi-rliindiyi yaja-niwijijju nanya yani
REL 1PLEX-go;PRS look_for-1PLEX>3SG:(-juyuniyi);FUT this[OBL]-ABL
niwi-jinjiyinji nana ninya yana gurlarl-awuju jalji
1PLEX-eat;FUT[REDUP] the[M] this_kind wash-1PLINCL:(-juyuniyi);FUT first
galimba dad-nawuningu yu-jiwa-yurr galimba nawi
and cook-1PLINCL:(-janyi);FUT M-ashes-LOC and 1PLIN:eat;FUT
This is jalma. This is jalma, it grow in creeks and we go and look for it. We eat this kind, we wash it first and cook it in (hot) ashes and we eat it.

10. Guyibum

Marra

Nana ninya gayibam
Bunalala, warr-iwiganji gal-arlindu na-manuga-yurr yilijili
Nana ninyana orange mani na-shop
Wagalurindu bayab nawu-manjigaya

Gayabam – Bush Orange (*Capparis umbonata*)

\[M\] ninya gayabam, bunarlarla warr-iwiganjiyi
the[M][M] bush_orange bush_orange call-1PLEXCL>3SG:(-ganji);PRS
gal-arlindu na-manuga-yurr yilijili
grow-3SG:go;PRS M-hill-LOC side
Nana ninyayana orange mani na-shop
the[M] this_kind orange like M-shop
wagalurndu bayab-nawumanji gaya
3SG:have;PRS buy-1PLINCL:do;PRS there

This is *gayabam*, (or) *bunarlarla* we call it. It grows alongside hills/rocky areas. This type is like oranges that we buy at the shop.

11. Guyiya

Marra

Gal-arlindu yimbirri wayburri jari gal-arlindu gaya Yawurrwarda
Ngaba Ngualayi ngaba na-manggan-yurr
Gal-arlindu
Niwi-jinji-yinjini nana ninya yana.

Guyiya – “Dog balls” (*Grewia retusifolia*)

Gal-arlindu yimbirri wayburri jari gal-arlindu
grow-3SG:go;PRS north;ALL south;ALL many grow-3SG:go;PRS
iya Yawurrwarda ngaba Ngualayi ngaba na-manggarn-yurr
there Yellow Water and (place_name) and M-road-LOC
gal-arlindu, Niwi-jinji-yinjini nana ninyayana.
grow-3SG:go;PRS 1PLEX-eat;FUT[REDUP] the[M] this_kind

It grows everywhere. There is a lot growing at Yellow Water (billabong) and at Ngualayi (billabong) and it grows along roads. We eat this type (of plant).
12 **Jirrama**

Marra

Na-rulul bubu marlumarlu janurr ngaba nyurndulnyurndul yarni
Na-ngurndul –ngurndul ni Gal-arlindu nya-dulun-yurr ngaba
Nya-balba-yurr yilijili
Gurl-gurl-niwijurliyi nana ninyayana
Yumarr mani medicine.

**Jirrama –** *(Pterocaulon serrulatum)*

\[
\begin{align*}
Na-\text{rulul} & \quad \text{bubu} \quad \text{marlumarlu} \quad \text{janurr} \quad \text{ngaba} \quad \text{ngurndulngurndul-yani} \\
\text{M}-\text{boil} & \quad \text{sore} \quad \text{covered}\text{,with}\text{,sores} \quad \text{mucus} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{throat}-\text{ABL} \\
\text{na-ngurndulngurndul-ni} & \quad \text{Gal-arlindu} \quad \text{nya-dulun-yurr} \quad \text{ngaba} \\
\text{M[OBL]-throat}-\text{PURP} & \quad \text{grow-3SG:go;PRS} \quad \text{N[OBL]-low-ALL} \quad \text{and} \\
\text{nya-balba-yurr} & \quad \text{yilijili.} \quad \text{Gurl-gurl-niwijurliyi} \quad \text{nana} \quad \text{ninyayana.} \\
\text{N[OBL]-river-ALL} & \quad \text{side} \quad \text{drink-drink-1PLEXCL}:(-jujunyi);\text{PRS} \quad \text{the[M]} \quad \text{this}\text{,kind} \\
\text{Yumarr} & \quad \text{mani} \quad \text{medicine.} \\
\text{good} & \quad \text{like} \quad \text{medicine}
\end{align*}
\]

(It treats) boils, sores, skin infections, mucus and (sore) throat – for the throat. It grows on flat/low areas and alongside rivers. We drink this type. It’s good, it’s like medicine.

13. **Dumbuyumbu**

Marra

Jarag –niwiju nana ninya, na-barndurrg-ni. Gurl niwijju,
gurl-nawuju, yumarr bindi nana ninya yana, nya-marranguru-ni galimba
nya-birlbarr-ni.

**Dumbuyumbu –** Sandalwood *(Santalum lanceolatum)*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Jarag-niwiju} & \quad \text{nana} \quad \text{ninya} \quad \text{na-barndurrg-ni} \\
\text{make-1PLEXCL}:(-jujunyi);\text{FUT} & \quad \text{the[M]} \quad \text{this[M]} \quad \text{M[OBL]-gland}-\text{PURP} \\
\text{Gurl-niwijju}, & \quad \text{gurl-nawuju}, \quad \text{yumarr bindi} \\
\text{drink-1PLEXCL}:(-jujunyi);\text{FUT} & \quad \text{drink-1PLINCL}:(-jujunyi);\text{FUT} \quad \text{good} \quad \text{properly} \\
\text{nana} \quad \text{ninyayana} & \quad \text{nya-marranguru-ni} \quad \text{galimba} \quad \text{nya-birlbarr-ni} \\
\text{the[M]} \quad \text{this}\text{,kind} & \quad \text{N[OBL]-head}-\text{PURP} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{N[OBL]-throat}-\text{PURP}
\end{align*}
\]

We make this for (treating) swollen glands (e.g. infections). We drink it, we drink it, this type is very good, for head(ache) and for (sore) throat.

14. **Mayarranji.**

Nana ninya mayarranji
Niwi-jinjijinji nana nanggayana
Yumarr nyarrba nyarrba.
Nana rimbirr-wugi yumarr nya-lib-manjarri
Ngaba Nya-gurl-manjarri
Gurl-gurl-niwijurliyi na-gulugal-ni
Mayarranja – Sandpaper fig (*Ficus opposita*)

_Nana ninya mayarranja_
the[M] this[M] sandpaper_fig

_Niwi-jinjiyinjini_ nana nanggayana yumarr nyarrbanyarrba
1PLEXCL-eat;FUT[REDUP] the[M] that_kind good sweet

_Nana rimbirr-wugi yumarr nya-lib-manjarr-i ngaba_
the[M] leaf-3SG;POSS good N[OBL]-bathe-NMLZ-PURP and

_nya-gurl-manjarr-i gurl-gurl-niwijurliyi na-gurlugal-ni_
N[OBL]-drink-NMLZ-PURP drink-drink-1PLEXCL:(-jujunyi);PRS M-headcold-PURP

This is _mayarranja_ (sandpaper fig). We eat that kind (of plant), it's good and sweet. The leaves are good for bathing with and for drinking (as in medicine). We drink it for head colds.
APPENDIX 4 – GINGER RILEY “JIRRAMA”

This is a video recording featuring Ginger Riley discussing the bush medicine jirrama (Pterocaulon serrulatum), made in the late 1980s by Nganiyurlma Media Association, a Ngukurr-based Indigenous media organisation. The following text was extracted from the edited version presented in Bush Medicine from Ngukurr (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). The video shows Ginger demonstrating the jirrama plant, discussing its use and showing how fresh jirrama leaves can be placed directly in nostrils to treat symptoms of flu and sinus problems.

There are two sections to this text. In the first section, Ginger speaks a mix of English (or rather, his non-native speaker version of English) and Kriol. The orthography accordingly switches between English and Kriol to reflect apparent switches in code that Ginger makes. In the second part, Ginger provides a short discussion in Marra, which interestingly begins with a focus on jirrama but leads to a discussion of country and his relationship to Marra country. (See §7.1 for further discussion on discursive features like these.)

1 Dijan jirrama
   this plant.name
   This is jirrama.

2 I dunno what munanga call ‘im
   Europeans
   I don’t know what Europeans call it (i.e. what it’s called in English)

3 but I call from Marra, jirrama
   But in Marra, I call it jirrama.

4 and that’s the medicine, this part iya
   here
   And that’s the medicine, this part here.

5 ah… let me lift ‘im up
   Ah… let me lift it up.

6 this part iya
   here
   This part here.

7 you can just get ‘im in one punch
   You can just get it in one pinch (i.e. you can obtain it by pinching off some leaves)

8 and squeeze ‘im up little bit
   And squeeze it up a little bit (i.e. crush leaves to release fragrances)
So you can smell it

we used to... smell it that one where
We would... smell it when

we used to have wanim... flu bedkol
what
we would have whatchamacallit... flu and/or headcolds.

we used to put ‘im like that
We would put it like this (demonstrating placing leaves in nostrils)

An’ smell it all the way
And smell it as we continue along

t hen... sometime... we used to bogi
then, sometimes, we would wash (with it)

and sometime used to drink lilbit, not too much
and sometimes (we) would drink a little bit, not too much.

just a little bit

now you can smell it

by him smell
Its scent

im really strong
It’s really strong

you can go right through la yu hed
You can (feel it) go right through your head (e.g. sinuses?)

o eniweya la bodi
or anywhere LOC body
Or anywhere around (your) body

gudwan, good medicine this one
good
It’s good, it’s good medicine this is

jirrama im neim
plant name 3SG name
Its name is jirrama

well that’s the bush life wi bin abum
Well that’s the bush life we had
This is the sort of thing that (we used as) medicine, no- no European...

There was no Western medicine at all

Only this sort

We drink small amounts

We bathe/wash with it (i.e. use it as a wash)

And (put it) into a billycan

We boil this type (of medicine).

Me... I'm a true Marra person, ??

My mother

My mother

Limmen Bight, Wamunggu
(is) Limmen Bight, Wamunggu (Maria Lagoon)
39 nganan... ya-gajirri-ni
  the[F] F[OBL]-mother[1]-PURP
  It belongs to my mother

40 jawurru ngana... gana n-gayarra Wamunggu
  3SG[POSS] the[F] REL F-there Wamunggu
  It's her (country), there at Wamunggu.
APPENDIX 5 – GINGER RILEY “GULBAN”

This recording was made in the late 1980s by Nganiyurlma Media Association, a Ngukurr-based Indigenous media organisation. It is another video recording featuring Ginger Riley discussing the bush medicine *gulban* (ti-tree, *Melaleuca stenostachya*). The following text is taken from the edited video *Bush Medicine from Ngukurr* (Nganiyurlma Media Association 1990). The video shows Ginger demonstrating the collection and use of *gulban* and describing briefly its role in Marra creation stories and song cycles.

Ginger speaks mostly in Kriol but also occasionally in his incompletely-acquired second language version of English which is influenced by Kriol. In the transcript, there are some questions and interjections by an off-screen producer or production assistant. Those utterances are labelled “IP” (Indigenous producer). The text is included here as it is noteworthy for its narrative structure and cultural content, in spite of Marra not being the main language of the text. The structure and content of this text is discussed further in §7.1.2.

1  *ninya nana gulban*

   this[M] the[M] plant_sp.

   This is *gulban*.

2  *warr-ngaganjiyi gulban, (1.4) nana ninya. (1.7)*

   call-1SG>3SG:(-ganji);PRS plant_sp. the[M] this[M]

   I call it *gulban*, this one.

3  *Aa... (1.5) because, (1.4) munanga na:*

   ah because European now

   Ah... because... (in) English now:

4  *Dreamtime (1.0) dreamtime that (1.4)*

   (In the) dreamtime, (in the) dreamtime, that...

5  *wanim, olda memeid, (1.2)*

   whats_it, DET[PL] mermaids

   whatchamacallit, the mermaids,

6  *thei bin gu thru langa dis wanim na, (1.9)*

   3PL PST go through LOC this what's_it now,

   They went through at this whatchamacallit then,

7  *gulban*

   plant_sp.

   *gulban.*
((sings))  
**Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji**  
garrinya garrinya, garrinya garrinya  
Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji  
garrinya garrinya...  
[end of scene]

9  
**Medicine**  
this  
one  
This is medicine.

10  
**Wi**  
bin  
oldei,  
boilim, (1.2)  
en  
bogi, (1.0)  
dis  
wan  
1PLINCL  
PST  
HABIT boil:TR and wash this one  
We would boil it, and wash (with), this one.

11  
**Det**  
memeid  
bin, (0.9)  
gu  
thru  
la  
dismob  
the mermaid PST go through LOC these  
The mermaid went through these (i.e. gulban is part of the mermaid songlines).

12  
**Laik**  
wi  
always go through like tree, eberrijing.  
like  
1PLINCL  
PST  
HABIT go through like tree, everything  
Like (how) we always go through things like trees and so on (i.e. when we sing songcycles).

13  
**Wel**  
thei  
bin  
gu  
thru  
la  
dis  
tri  
na,  
gulban.  
well  
3PL  
PST  
go through LOC this tree now plant_sp.  
Well, they went through at this tree, gulban. (i.e. their Dreaming track passed through gulban, i.e. they named it).

14  
**Good**  
medicine.  
[end of scene]

15  
**We**  
can't  
drink  
it,  
but,  
only bogi  
we can’t drink it, but, only wash  
We can’t drink it, but only wash (with it).

16  
**IP:**  
En  
yu  
boilim  
holot?  
and  
2SG  
boil:TR whole  
And do you boil the whole thing?

17  
**Boilim**  
holot  
boil:TR whole  
Boil the whole thing.

18  
**IP:**  
La  
biliki?  
LOC  
billycan  
In a billycan?

19  
**Yuwai.**  
La  
biliki  
Yes  
LOC  
billycan  
Yes. In a billycan.
And you drink it.

No. Just wash (with it).

Is it a toxic substance?

Yes, it’s… toxic. It might be toxic.

Because the elders/ancestors, they didn’t drink it.

The mermaid(s) named this species, gulban.

And that’s what the ancestors believed.

And I’d say that I still believe (it).

Because it’s good medicine, this gulban,

To drink a little bit if someone is sick, internally, in (the) stomach.

You can drink it a little bit (i.e. in small doses)?
Yuwai. gin dringgim lilbit
yes can drink:TR little
Yes, (you) can drink it a little bit.

Gotta ‘quash ‘im up, because it’s only, sofwan wud
gotta squash 3SG up because it’s only soft wood
(You) gotta squash it up because it’s only soft wood
((placing gulban into a billycan))

Aa! jis pudum langa biligen
Ah just put:TR LOC billycan
Ah! Just put it into a billycan.
((breaking apart gulban branches, placing into billycan))

Now wi gada biliken distaim
now 1PLINCL COM billycan this_time
Now, we have billycans thesedays.

Wen… (4.0)distaim na, wi nomo bin abum eni billycan bifo
when this_time now 1PLINCL NEG PST have any billycan before
When… thesedays now, we didn’t have any billycans before.

Onli mindiwaba, wi yusdu abum, en boilim, garram tharran
only saltwater_mussel 1PLINCL used.to have and boil:TR with that
We only had saltwater mussel (shells) and (we) boiled it with that.

Mindiwaba, spilim indu nathawan mindiwaba
saltwater_mussel tip:TR into another saltwater_mussel
A saltwater mussel (shell). Tip it into another saltwater mussel shell.

En tjakidiwei olda bushis
and throw-away all_the leaves/branches
And throw out the leaves and branches.

En spilim igin pudum mo wada lilbit en spilim indu thet
and tip:TR again put:TR more water little and tip:TR into that
najawan mindiwaba, meigi klin wada.
other saltwater_mussel make:TR clean water
And tip it again (i.e. into another shell), put some more water (into it) and tip it
into the other saltwater mussel shell; make it clean water (i.e. a clear solution).

Den thei bin oldei yusim, waipim ai, klinimap ai (1.8)
then 3PL PST HABIT use:TR wipe:TR eye clean:TR:up eye
Then they would use it, (to) wipe the eye, clean the eye.

Aa ((coughs)) wen thei bin oldei sik lilbit,
then when 3PL PST HABIT sick little
Ah… when they would be a little bit sick,
Oh, not too much, (then) they would drink it.

This...gulban.

I’ve believed (in it) since I was young.

Because I was with (the) elders my whole life.

Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji
Garrinya garrinya, garrinya garrinya
Gulba-gulbanji, gulba-gulbanji
Garrinya garrinya, garrinya garrinya

[end of scene]

[GR_BushMedicineFromNgukurr(1990)_00:09:15]
APPENDIX 6 – TOPSY MINDIRRIJU NUMAMURDIRDI “EARLY LIFE STORY”

This recording was made on July 14, 2010 at Numbulwar. It was made during a group recording session involving seven people. We gathered in the shade under the elevated house Topsy shares with her two sisters, Gathawuy and Wunyuga. Both Topsy and Gathawuy were there, as well as visitors from Ngukurr: me, Anthony Daniels, John Joshua (Kriol speakers and Marra learners) and L1 Marra speaker Freda Miramba Roberts. We were joined by Topsy’s younger brother Henry Juluba Numamurdirdi who also resides in Numbulwar. The group recording session organically evolved into each Marra speaker present taking turns to record autobiographical accounts of life events from their younger years. Topsy, the eldest in the group, gave the following short account of her early life which she spent living in the Limmen Bight River district. The resulting text is actually an informal interview, with fellow Marra speaker Freda Roberts offering Topsy semi-regular guiding questions and interjections:

TN: Wunubarri gana nganjani.
[placename] REL 1SG:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP]
I was living at Wunubarri.

jub-niyiyurranyi, warlburri nana warlanyan
descend-1PLEXCL:go;PST;HABIT down[ALL] the[M] fish
We would go down to lower ground (for) the fish

warlja gana jaw-niwanji
dugong REL harpoon-1PLEXCL:(-ganji);PST;CONT
We would harpoon dugong

gayarra, jaw-wilanji
there, harpoon-3PL>3SG:(-ganji);PST;CONT
There, they would harpoon it

warri-niyiyagarli, warrajarri
return-1PLEXCL>3SG:take;PST;CONT top[ALL]
We would take it back to higher ground

niwanjanji gayarra, Wunubarri
1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] there [placename]
We were staying there at Wunubarri

[To FR]: gana niwanjanji, gana n-nga-radburr nga-niya
REL 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] REL N-nga-country nga-2SG;GEN

gana n-gayarra
REL N-there
We were staying, there at your country
FR: yi, ngina
  yes 1SG;GEN
  yes, mine

TN: Wunubarri gana niwanjanji, gayarra
  [placename] REL 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] there
  We were living there at Wunubarri

FR: Miniji, nuwu-yurranyi Miniji?
  [placename] 2PL-go;PST;HABIT [placename]
  Did you used to go to Miniji?

TN: niwi-yurranyi Mirniji, niwi-yurranyi Wirrinyanggu
  1PLEXCL-go;PST;HABIT [placename] 1PLEXCL-go;PST;HABIT [placename]
  We would go to Mirniji, we would go to Wirrinyanggu

Wirrinyanggu
  [placename]
  (to) Wirrinyanggu

FR: Dawala.
  [placename]
  (to Dawala)

TN: marluy. oni... Wirrinyanggu gana niwi-yurranyi
nothing only [placename] REL 1PLEXCL-go;PST;HABIT
  No. We’d only go to Wirrinyanggu.

Warlburri jum-niwiyurranyi
down[ALL] descend-1PLEXCL:go;PST;HABIT
jaw-wilanyi nana warlja Wunubarri
harpoon-3PL>3SG:-ganji);PST;PUNCT the[M] dugong [placename]
  We would go down to lower ground, they would harpoon a dugong, at
  Wunubarri.

Wunubarri jaw-wilanyi nana warlja waligi
[placename] harpoon-3PL>3SG:-ganji);PST;PUNCT the[M] dugong, dugong
  At Wunubarri, they would harpoon the dugong

niwanjanji, guda gayarra
  1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] that’s_all there
  We were living right there

FR: Ni-galuni wala wul-agagurr? Marluy?
2SG-have:PST;CONT the[PL] PL-child nothing
  Did you have children? Or not?

FN: Nana nanggaya balwayi, wu-galuni na
  the[M] that[M] big 3SG-have:PST;CONT now
  she (only) had the big one (eldest one) then
I had the eldest one at that time.

FR: *Gabu, nyiyin warr-wa.*
INTERJ name speak_name-2SG;(ganji);IMP
Say his name.

TN: "Manjayu." ((sorrowful exclamations))
[personal_name]
Manjayu.

...
FR: yo guda, yes that's_all yes, okay.

FR: gal-gar-walarlini gaya, ngi? grow-grow-3PL:go;PST there, TAG they grew up there, didn't they?

TN: [yuwai] yes [yes

AD: [en det feswan...= and that first_one [and the eldest...]

FR: =niwi-rambi na! 1PLEXCL-together now =The whole lot of us!

TN: yuwai yes yes

FR: nirrwinya 1PLEXCL us

TN: Niwanjanji::: warrnggu nana nanggaya 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] until the[M] that[M] dud-ngayaganyi wuninggi... nanggaya find-1SG>3SG:(yagayi);PST;PUNCT additionally that[M] We lived there a long time until the next one came along, that one...

FN: nanggaya that[M] that one

TN: bla Malangaya dedi POSS [personal_name] father Malangaya’s father

FR: warr-wa, nyyin speak_name-2SG:(-ganji);IMP name say the name

TN: nana= Jagwilyim the[M] [personal_name] Jack William

HN: =Jagwilyim [personal_name] =Jack William

TN: yuwaï yes yes

FR: ngunumangguyurr gana ngarl-umi further REL talk-2SG:do;IMP Keep talking.

TN: gayarra gana niwanjanji warrnggu, there REL 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] until lujim-ngalgu-bla Abaju-mob lose;TR-1SG>3PL:do;PST;PUNCT POSS [personal_name]-COLL We stayed there until I lost (the father) of Abaju and company.

TN: niwanjanji gayarra::: warrnggu 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] there until nga-niwi-rillini win.garra-yurr na CENTR-1PLEXCL:go;PST here-ALL now We stayed there for a long time until we came here.

TN: win.garra-yurr nga-niwi-rillini here-ALL CENTR-1PLEXCL:go;PST We came here.

FN: [warrajarri, warrajarri, Ropa-nyindi top;ALL top;ALL Roper River Mission-ALL to higher land, to Roper River mission.

TN: warrajarri Ropa top;ALL Roper River Mission To higher land: the Roper River Mission

mingi ngalgu-galungi wala walaya now 1SG>3PL:have;PST the[PL] those I had those (children) then

wul-ngina, Abaju, Manjayu... ngan i gayi... PL-1SG;POSS [personal_name][personal_name] who another My (children): Abaju, Manjayu, and the other one...

FR: Wilyim [personal_name] William
Yes, [personal_name]. I had them at that time.
APPENDIX 7 – FANNY GATHAWUY NUMAMURDIRDI – ORAL HISTORY

This recording was made, like the previous one, on July 14, 2010 during a group recording session at Numbulwar. As mentioned above, the Marra speakers present among the group of seven people took turns to record short autobiographical accounts of life events from their younger years. In this extract, Fanny Gathawuy Numamurdirdi summarised her early life, including her work on stations to the south of the Roper Region and then her return and her role in establishing the Wiyagiba outstation on her traditional country. As with the previous text, there are numerous interjections from other people present, which are included here to reflect the lively atmosphere among the group during the recording session.

FN:  *Guda* nirrwinya- that’s_all 1PLEXCL
     Well, we...
     *gana nurrwunya gayarra gana nuwanji nana* REL 2PL there REL 2PL:sit;PST;CONT the[M]
     *nyma mingi gal-wanga.* this[M] now grow-3SG:go;PST;PUNCT and you guys sitting there, this one here had grown up (referring to Juluba).

     *Nawanji::: gana nginarra mingi nga-rlini* 1PLINCL:sit;PST;CONT REL 1SG now 1SG-go;PST
     *wayburri na* south;ALL now We’d been staying here, and then I headed south.

FR:  *Bigana... nayalngardi nunggu-ganji, ngi?* because son[1] 3SG>2SG-take;PST;CONT TAG Because… my (classificatory) son took you, didn’t he?

FN:  *Yi!* yes

FR:  *Wayburri (m... )* south;ALL Southwards...

FN:  *Guda gaya gana wurg-niwinindini la stok-kem.* that’s_all there REL work-1PLEXCL:do;PST;CONT LOC stock,camp Right there is where we were working at the stock camp.

FR:  *Tenambrini* [place name] (at) Tanumbrini (station)
This old lady lived at Tanumbirini and O.T. Downs, my son had taken her southwards to the stock camp(s) we used to have.

...
We came back.

The cattle we were mustering cattle.

We'd ride horseback. (Lit: the horse would be carrying us)

We'd chase after cattle.

We lived there (for a long time), alright.

And that was that for good.
We went down to Borroloola.

We were living there.

We were living there (for a while).

Then we came back towards here.

We came back from the south.

We were working in the south and then we came back here.

So we’re here.

You all came back here to (your) country then, didn’t you?

We were living here (i.e. Numbulwar) and then we headed south, to (our) country.

I was there and I “thing”-ed the place of ours.
Album-ngamindini nana gagamarr.
help-1SG:do;PST;CONT the[M] MoMo[2]
I was helping your maternal grandfather (said to FR).

FR: Na Wiyagiba.
LOC [placename]
At Wiyagiba.

FN: Nawumburlana... ganarrinya, gana narriya murimuri
nuwugi.
2PL[GEN]
What's-his-face... your father, (and) your grandfather.

FR: Nana Wiyagiba?
the[M] [placename]
Wiyagiba?

FN: Nginarra nana nanggaya wumbul, ngamburlmarli,
1SG the[M] that[M] what's_it 1SG:what's_it;PST;CONT
Wiyagiba, nginarra.
[placename] 1SG
It was me doing that whatchamacallit at Wiyagiba, me.

HN: (XX XX)

FN: Guda gal-gal-i... walartini wala wilnya.
that's_all grow-grow- 3PL:go;PST;CONT the[PL] this[PL]
And so, these guys grew up there.

Gagamarr-wariya guda gayarra gana niwanji.
MoMo:2-PL[KIN] that's_all there REL 1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT
Your grandmothers were living there, right.

FR: Yi.
yes
Yes.

FN: Niwanjanji gayarra:::
1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP] there
jaw-jaw-wiliganji nana warlja.
harpoon-harpoon-3PL>3SG:-(ganji);PST;CONT the[M] dugong
We were living here (for some time), we'd harpoon dugong.

Yundunyuga niwi-yarlji, nana mindiwaba warugu
sea_turtle 1PLEXCL:eat;PST;CONT the[M] saltwater_mussel egg
We'd eat sea turtle, saltwater mussels, (turtle) eggs...

Niwanjanji:::
1PLEXCL:sit;PST;CONT[REDUP]
We lived there (for some time)...
Then your grandmothers, they came to us and we were all living there.

FR: Yi, nga-yalya
Yes, I know.

HN: Niwi-rambi...
1PLEXCL-together
All of us together.

FN: Guda ngabar-ngabar-walamindini na.
that's all die-die-3PL:do;PST;CONT now
But they've all passed away now.

FR: (main) gagumob...
1SG[GEN] MoMo:PL
(Oh...) my grandmothers...
**APPENDIX 8 – HOLLY NGARILWARRA DANIELS “HOLLY-GIRL”**

The following is an English translation by Cherry Daniels of an autobiographical narrative written in Kriol by Holly Ngarilwarra Daniels. It is extracted from *Blekba Stori* (Deakin University (Faculty of Arts), 2004), a text collection from Aboriginal students and graduates who studied education at Deakin University. *Holly-Girl* provides an account of Holly's experiences in the 1950s of temporarily leaving the Roper River Mission and interacting with the pastoral industry and with Marra people who were still spending significant periods of time on their traditional country.

A long time ago, when I was a little girl, and my daddy died, my uncle, my mummy's brother, took us to a cattle station, they called it Tanumbrini. We went on horses that belonged to my uncle. We had pack horses to carry our swags and food, and we had riding horses. [There were ten of us and Betty Roberts, Holly-girl's sister.] All had a horse to ride on, but not me! I rode with my mummy. We left Ngukurr on a Saturday morning. It was school holidays too. My uncle told my mummy that he was taking us away just for a couple of weeks, but it was just about two years.

The first camp we had was at Warlgundu (St Vidgeon Station). Second camp we had was at Frances Hume country. That billabong was only a little round one, but it has a big name. It's called Warlingandu. We slept there one night... my two cousins made a camp for my mummy on top of a tree. They made a platform for my mummy to sleep on. The cut six stakes to make the platform. Do you know what a galagala (platform) is? It's like a cattle station camp where they made tables to dry up all the salt beef. Or maybe you've seen when old women make a little jetty for sitting on top of the water. Well that kind now, they call it a galagala. Like that now, they made that camp for my mummy to sleep on.

Early in the morning when we woke up we had breakfast and then we got going. We made camp beside the Limmen River. Well, at this place my uncle showed me three round stones. These stones they are eggs belonging to my mummy's and my uncle's 'dreaming': eggs for the black duck.

Well, when you are little you don't see the danger in ceremonies, you just touch anything. Yes, I was holding the egg and my uncle told me to put the eggs back. When I was feeling the eggs they were fairly heavy and very smooth. Well, I put the eggs in their right place.

We went and stayed at Tanumbrini station for nearly two months, and you know, when that jet plane was new, well we thought that our Lord Jesus was coming down; we were very frightened and some of my family started lifting their hands to God on high.

Well, one weekend we went to a billabong. It's called Bugumin. We went there to gather garnaya (lily root) and gumirr (blackberries). Yes, to get these foods (bush tucker) we had to climb a big hill and that road was very rough with cliffs and a
narrow road. I walked in front, Jacob followed after me, Susan and my mummy came last. When we came away from the cliff, Susan said: ‘Abija (grand-mother) you look up, there’s that same aeroplane’. My mummy nearly fell down because Susan frightened her grandmother too much. We went down then to that billabong.

Well! We were going to cross the billabong to the other side because my uncle and his wife were already on the other side. I saw the water first, but not Susan, she jumped in and followed my mummy. When Susan had waded across she didn’t see the leech climbing up her leg and on her arm. She kept on getting jao jao (lily stems) and yarlbun (seed pods), she was singing too. Bye and bye she looked, and she just threw out all the lily stems and roots and she went straight to my mummy.

A long time ago in the cattle stations the managers made little children work all day too. Well Susan, Hector and I would get up every morning, collect eggs, milk the goats or sometimes we’d muster the horses for the stockmen, when they (the stockmen) went mustering. We got paid too like the stockmen, what I mean is that we were given blankets, calico and hats. Those were the things that were our pay.

I had a stone bruise in my left foot and the manager told my mummy that he was sending me to Tennant Creek, but my mummy said: ‘No, otherwise I won’t see my girl again’. That same night my mummy told the three of us to roll up our swags and we started walking to Borroloola. This is true, what I’m telling you because we walked from Tanumbrini to Borroloola. Think now, poor us, we didn’t have any horses or Toyota. Poor us, we only had our feet.

Well, it took us two weeks to reach Borroloola. The weather was very hot, and you think now, that ground was very hot. But it didn’t matter, we had to walk. My foot was very sore. No matter that my foot was very sore, I kept walking. My mummy and my two sisters carried all our belongings and I was left to walk.

At one place called Eighteen Mile we met up with Queenie Riley111, Jock boy and my brother, Jock boy’s daddy. ‘Look here Queenie’, her husband said.

‘Hello!’ Queenie said. ‘We came to take you back to Roper’.

‘Yes!’, my mummy said. ‘Good-o, grand-daughter, I’m happy now’, my mummy said to Queenie. From there we went to Borroloola.

I went to that school maybe for six months, or maybe a year; I’m not quite sure for how long. Borroloola ran out of food and the welfare white man had to send us out in the bush until the cargo boat arrived with the food. We stayed in the bush for six weeks then we came back to Borroloola. We stayed there for one month then we went to Limmen River, with all the people from Borroloola.

111 Queenie Riley is the sister of Elsie Joshua whose story is partly reproduced in §2.1.2 and of Freda Miramba Roberts who is profiled is §2.4.5.1.
because they had a Gunabibi (ceremony) for my abuji (father's cousin). This old man was my daddy's cousin.

The trip to Limmen River took us five days. We saw lots of fire along the saltwater side and my dedi (uncle), my own daddy's brother told us that our abuji (grandmothers) were coming and we were to meet them at Wunubarri. There where the Gunabibi would be held.

I was twelve years old now and this ceremony was the first one I would be attending. My daddy's family and my grandmother's family said: 'Little girl, we are very happy for you because you are the last child of the one who died at Channel Island and we want you to see this ceremony for your grandfather'.

Before the ceremony was over, we had another ceremony called Lorrkon. In this ceremony everyone danced with my abuji's bones. ... The old men told the old women to give me some sugarbag (wild honey) in a billy can. The old women gave me the billy can with the wild honey and they said: 'Little girl you take this to your amuri (father's auntie), Wadangaja'.

I did what they said, but I didn't know they were going to chase me and take the wild honey off me. When I came out in the open, one old man chased me and everyone cried out: 'Look out wagurr (little girl) ngabuji (a man) is chasing you to take the wild honey from you!'. Oh gosh! I ran like a skinny goanna!

When the jandi ceremony was over we went back to Ngukurr (Roper River Mission). We were very happy to see our family again after two years away from them. When we left Borroloola we didn't have to walk, we came by canoe, because three families went back to Ngukurr.

We camped at a place called Milanyjan and my two brothers, Jock's father and uncle, speared a lot of fish for us. We had good feed of those fish. The next day we went to Nayirrinji (Towns River) and made camp there, and while we were making the camp we saw a fire at the mouth of the Roper River. We knew that the cargo boat had gone to Ngukurr taking cargo to Ngukurr from Brisbane. We arrived at the mouth of the Roper River and there my brother and Queenie left us; they went to Rose River.

From that time until today I never went away to other places for one or two years. I make sure I come back before Christmas.
APPENDIX 9 – THE MARRA COVERB “GUBARL” IN KRIOL

The extended conversation transcribed below is a key example of a lexeme, *gubarl* ‘scavenge’, that has transferred from Marra to Kriol and retained currency (see §4.4.3). In this conversation, I asked three L1 Kriol-speaking men aged between 25 and 30 with no knowledge of Marra about the use of *gubarl*. The lively discussion that followed provided a range of examples and uses of the lexeme, including a nominalised version, *gubarlnga* ‘scavenger’, which appears to be a very rare phenomenon in Kriol.

1 GD: *en ‘gubarlgubarl’?*
   and (what about) *‘gubarlgubarl’?*

2 KM: [*BALA*]
   Poor thing!

3 DR: [*Thanja-] BALA LIL GUBARLNGA=
   That’s- Poor thing, little scavenger!=

4 CD: =AA JBALA=
   =Ah, poor thing!=

5 KM: =sabi [laik warlkwarlk
   =You know like crows?

6 DR: [*gubarlgubarl-*
   to scavenge

7 DR: *mela tok- wai- [det warlk-warlk=
   we say- well- the crow

8 GD: *[ai?*
   huh?

9 KM: =wal warlkwarlk gubari=
   well crows *‘gubarl’*

10 DR: =gubari= 
    ‘gubarl’

11 DR: [*mela- det] gubarlinga, mela- det warlkwarlk im gubarlinga det black crow
    we- that scavenger, we- the crow is a scavenger, the black crow

12 KM: [*gubarl langa*
    scavenges at

13 DR: *im na gubarlinga*
    that’s a scavenger

14 DR: *im laigi gubarl daga from rabishdamp eniweya*
    it likes to scavenge food from the rubbish dump (or) anywhere

15 DR: *wal, mela luk ‘ei yu lu im gubarl det ting’*
    well, we see: “hey, see it’s scavenging that thing”.

16 DR: *o ai bin gubarl dis shet*
    or I scrounged this shirt (from any old place)

17 DR: “*ei ai bin gubarl this shirt”*
    “hey I scavenged this shirt”

18 DR: “*ai bin gubarl this trausis”*
    “I scavenged these pants”

19 DR: “*ai bin gubarl det baik”*
    “I scavenged that bike”

20 DR: “*ai bin gubarl det mani”*
    “I scavenged that money”
21 KM: *im, im ebrijing det wed=
it, it’s everything, that word
22 DR: =ei lil gubarlwan dis mani, ai bin gubarlgubarlbat tharrai la ting en ai bin kaman
=hey this money is a small scavenged amount, I was scavenging it there at
whatsit and I came and won (at cards)
23 DR: gubarl min. yu jis, yuno, [yu, laik yu, yu] poor man, yu gajimbat, yuno, yu
wanguuluwan
‘gubarl’ means, you just, you know, you, like you, you’re a poor man, you’re
getting, you know, you’re alone in the world
24 CD: [jis gubalinga]
just a scavenger
25 DR: laik poor man, gubalinga
like a poor man, (is) ‘gubalinga’
26 DR: thei gulu ‘gubalinga’
they call him/it ‘gubalinga’
27 GD: gubalinga?
‘gubalinga’
28 DR: yuwa, ‘bala lil gubalinga im’, laik im gubalinga=
yes, ‘poor thing, he’s a little scavenger he is’, like he’s a scavenger=
29 GD: =sambodi weya im gubarlgubarl?
=someone who scavenges?
30 DR: yuwa, im gubarlgubarl, im gubalinga()thei gulu im
yes, (if/when) s/he scavenges, (then) s/he’s a ‘gubalinga’, they call him/her.
31 GD: bobala [hehe ]
poor thing
32 DR: [Ebobala]
poor thing
33 GD: laik detmob la Katherrain=
like those people in Katherine=
34 DR: =Eyuuwi [ola gubalinga jeya na la KatherrainE thei oldei gubarlgubarl smok en
gubarlgubarlbat enijing jeya: dringk
yes the scavengers are right there in Katherine, they always scrounge around for
smokes and scavenge anything there: drinks
35 CD: [ahEHEHEHEH
36 DR: thei gubarl enijing alabat
they scavenge anything, they do
APPENDIX 10 – SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON KRIOL VERBS DERIVED FROM MARRA AND ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES

The following tables provide information that expands upon the summary provided in Table 4–2 in §4.5. They describe an additional twelve Kriol verbs that are derived from Marra and other languages, complementing the ten that were described in §4.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BAL</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>Kriol Dikshenri</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Etymology**

Marra: *bal*- (coverb) 'to pound (with a stone or other hard object)'.
(Heath 1981: 438)

Warndarrang: *bal*- (coverb) 'to pound something'. (Heath 1980a: 125)

See also:

Alawa: *berl*- (coverb) 'beat percussion instrument'. (Sharpe 2001a: 11)

Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *balyun* 'to pound' (Heath 1980c: 176)

Nunggubuyu: *-walga* 'to pound (root, foods, etc.) with stone (to soften them); to smash (something); to injure (person).

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Ngalakgan: *rlorrkr lorrk*
Ngandji: *gurlh-dhu*
Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *barpu, djundhun*

*Bal* as a Kriol verb most obviously matches the coverb of the same form found in Marra and Warndarrang. Cognates are also attested in Alawa, Nunggubuyu and Ritharrŋu/Wägilak. A Marra example occurred in a discussion about the medicinal plant *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* (*Crinum uniflorum*) (Note: not taken from the *dirringgirl-dirringgirl* text transcribed in Appendix 2 and discussed in §7.8.1):

(1) *nana nanggaya jaw-nimi, bal-im, buylim-nimi*


*lim-nijurra*

bathe-2SG;go;FUT

(with) that one, you dig it up, you pound it, you boil it and you wash with it.

[FN_20100714MARRAgroupNUMgd01a_00:10:39]

It is a common verb known to all Roper Kriol speakers. It is one of a number of hitting verbs and widely known but relatively infrequent given its semantics are more specific that its hypernym *kilim* (hit). *Bal* typically refers to events where the hitting is a vertical

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112 Heath lists two further senses of *bal* that occur in transitive constructions. One relates to completing something, the other to marking or decorating (this sense is referred to in the discussion of the Kriol exclamation *balngayi* in §3.4.3).
downward motion (cf. ngum ‘hit on back’ which has a lateral trajectory) or it can refer to
general hitting events, semantically close to the English thump.

Heath describes the Marra coverb as having three senses but the semantic variation
suggests they could be treated as homonyms. The sense of ‘marking’ appears to have
transferred in the fossilised Kriol idiom balngayi ‘I wish’ discussed in §3.4.3. The sense of
‘pound’ has the greatest number of cognates and hence is a good candidate for
reinforcement and transfer into Kriol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BARDAP</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English gloss</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Semantic equivalents in other substrates**

Ngandi: ’twop-dhu ‘jump, jump up or away’
Nunggubuyu: (v) =abi- ‘to jump, shift position quickly’, Yolnu Matha: niir’yun ‘be surprised, jump in fright’
Alawa: nyirgg- (coverb): ‘frighten, make jump’

*Bardap* was previously not documented as a Kriol verb. It is documented as a Marra
coverb with the exact form and semantics as the Kriol verb and in other Marran
languages (Alawa and Warndarrang) with slightly different forms or semantics. Like
numerous other non-English based verbs described in Chapter 4, it is noticeable for
having a clear physical manifestation or gesture that regularly accompanies verbal
definitions provided by Kriol speakers. It appears to be well-known to most or Kriol
speakers, indicated by speakers in their 20s being clearly familiar with it:

(2) wen sambodi braitini’ yu: “e1! e1! yu bin
wen somebody frighten:TR 2SG hey hey 2SG PST
meigim mi bardap
make:TR 1SG jump_in_fright

When someone frightens you (and you say): “Hey! Hey! You made me ‘bardap’”

Although the semantics and form of *bardap* is most clearly reflected in Marran languages,
related lexemes are also found in Yolngu Matha and Nunggubuyu, suggesting its presence
in Kriol is a result of reinforcement between speakers of different substrate languages.
### DIRR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to fart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>vi. fart; emit wind from anus. Location: Barunga, Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Very common. Known in Barunga Kriol as well as Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>dirr</em>- (coverb) intransitive: 'to fart', transitive: 'to copulate with'. Warndarrang: <em>dirr</em>- (coverb): 'to fart' Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: <em>dirrŋˈgun</em>- 'to fart'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Ngandi, Ngalakgan, Alawa: ? Nunggubuyu: =<em>jima</em>- 'to fart, break wind'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existence of *dirr* in the Kriol lexicon, more so than many other verbs described in this chapter, is aligned with notions that substrate lexemes are more likely to be retained when they relate to private or taboo domains. In a discussion of substrate lexical influences of African languages on Ndyuka (a creole of Surinam), Huttar argued that substrate lexemes are likely to be retained in domains that relate to “aspects of everyday life that slaves wished to keep at least partly secret from Europeans” (Huttar 1985 in Kouwenberg 1994: 541). Verbs like *dirr* and others described in Chapter 4 such as *ngar* ‘have an erection’ and *ngumungumu* ‘thrust’ appear to support this notion.

*Dirr* is extremely common in Roper Kriol among children and adults alike with its frequency outstripping the superstrate equivalent ‘fart’. The form *dirr* is identical to the coverb occurring in Marra and Warndarrang and an obvious cognate occurs in Ritharrŋu. No semantic equivalents were attested in documentation of Ngandi, Ngalakgan or Alawa, leaving the question of its exact etymology unresolved. It can be also be hypothesised onomatopoeia could be a factor, potentially explaining why the similar forms occur in other languages like Ritharrŋu.

### DIRRWWU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to dive, enter a body of water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>as &quot;<em>didiwu</em>&quot;: vi. dive; plunge, enter water (Toyota into Wilton Crossing). Location: Barunga, Ngukurr. as &quot;<em>dirrawu</em>&quot;: vi. dive; jump in. Location: Barunga, Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Very common. Extends at least to Barunga Kriol. Not used in Gurindji Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>dirrwu</em>- (coverb): 'to jump into water; go into water’ Warndarrang: <em>dirrwu</em>- (coverb): 'to plunge into (water), to dive in’ Alawa: <em>dirrwu</em>- (coverb): 'jump, dive in (to water)’ See also: Nunggubuyu: =<em>dirrwu-dha</em>- 'to jump into water’, ‘perhaps a recent borrowing from creole’ (Heath 1982b: 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Ngandi: <em>jurrh-dhu</em>- ‘to plunge in (to water)’ Ngalakgan: <em>burkburk</em>- ‘to dive in’, <em>jap</em>- ‘to dive, jump in’ Nunggubuyu: =<em>nalba-walga</em>- 'to jump into water’, =<em>jalburrrda</em>- ‘to jump into water’ Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: =<em>dhurrmutʒdu</em>- ‘to jump into water’, =<em>djylpurru</em>- ‘to plunge into water’, =<em>djyljuuyu</em>- ‘to jump into water’, =<em>djurrjyu</em>- ‘to go into water’, =<em>yiŋŋu</em>- ‘to plunge into water’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dirrwu is derived from a coverb occurring in all three Marran languages. Example (3) was documented by Ken Hale in 1959 (the verb form appears to be incomplete):

(3) dirrwu-nin.gu na-ngu-yurr
    go_into_water-1SG>3SG?? M[OBL]-water-ALL
    He fell in the water.

(Hale 1959: 297, Hale's translation, glossing added)

Dirrwu is another extremely common verb used and known by all Roper Kriol speakers. It is derived from a coverb used in all three Marran languages. Heath also documented it in Nunggubuyu, but mentioned that it is "perhaps a recent borrowing from creole" (Heath 1982b: 26). It is most commonly glossed as 'dive' but differs semantically in that the action of going into water does not have to be swift or require a jumping or leaping component. For example a four-wheel-drive can dirrwu into a river or billabong simply by rolling or driving slowly into it. This semantic component is also suggested in (3) where the English verb 'fall' is in Hale's translation of dirrwu. In Kriol, dirrwu is semantically related to bogi 'wash, swim' but refers to an entity entering wholly (or almost wholly) into water. It does not refer to washing or showering, which bogi can. An extended meaning of dirrwu occurs in reference to AFL football, when players dive to the ground or into a pack of players in order to gain possession of the football.

This verb is an example of a verb derived from Marran languages that is common not only in Roper Kriol, but also in the neighbouring Barunga Kriol dialect spoken well outside the area in which speakers of Marran languages typically lived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>to crawl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>vi. crawl. Location: Ngukurr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Common. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>gil</em>- (coverb): 'to crawl, to creep, to move very slowly'. Warndarrang: <em>gil</em>- (coverb): 'to crawl, to move very slowly'. Alawa: <em>gel</em>- (coverb): 'sneak, go on hands and knees'. See also: Ngalakgan: <em>gerlerlh</em>- (v): 'to slip, slide down'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Ngandi: ? Ngalakgan: <em>garrbe</em>- 'to crawl', <em>jarlarla</em>- 'to crawl' Nunggubuyu: =<em>yalgarwi</em>- 'to crawl, creep' Ritharrnu/Wägilak: <em>dirrirr'yun</em>- 'to crawl; to shift around (in sitting position)', <em>dhurarun</em>- 'to move very slowly, to crawl', <em>djalarayun</em>- 'to crawl', <em>wakalama</em>- 'to crawl'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While *krol* (from 'crawl') is attested in Kriol, *gil* (often reduplicated as *gilgil*) is a synonymous or near-synonymous verb. It is unclear which lexeme is more frequently used – both appear to be widely known – or if there are slight semantic differences.
between *gil* and *krol*. *Gil* has transferred from coverbs found in the three Marran languages, with the only phonological difference being the Alawa form *gel* which is not possible in Marra and Warndarrang as they lack the [e] phoneme. A spontaneous Marra example containing this coverb is:

(4)  

```
guda nginjani nanggay wa-minaja gana
```

*gil-arlindu*  

crawl-3SG[PRS]-go;PRS

Well I don’t know what it’s looking at, that which is crawling.

As a Kriol verb it was known to all young speakers and also occurs in the *Kriol Dikshenri*. All evidence suggests that *gil* is a common Kriol verb that has transferred exclusively from the Marran language family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>JARLU</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English gloss</strong></td>
<td>lead by the arm or hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Known by most but not all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Etymology** | Alawa: *jarlu* (coverb): ‘lead, e.g. lead a blind person with a stick; by the elbow; etc.’  

See also:  

Marra: *jarlu* (noun): ‘arm; branch (of tree); wing (of bird)’.  

Alawa: *jarlu* (noun): ‘upper arm (from elbow)’.

| **Semantic equivalents in other substrates** | Warndarrang: *nunggurna* - ‘arm’, *jard-* (coverb) ‘to seize by the arm’  

Ngandi: *barnja-bart* ‘to grab by the arm’, *barnja* ‘arm’.  

Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *waŋa* ‘arm’  

Ngalakgan: *wanja* ‘arm’  

Nunggubuyu: =lhagaaga- ‘to guide along, to lead (someone)’, lhaman ‘upper arm’, *wanja, ara, yarrga* ‘arm’.

*Jarlu* is also derived from Marran languages, although the form is only attested in Marra and Alawa. In Marra, *jarlu* was only documented as a noun, broadly meaning ‘limb’ but commonly applied to human referents with the meaning ‘arm’. In Alawa, the nominal form is documented, as well as a coverb that Sharpe defined as “lead, e.g. lead a blind person” (2001a: 50). This coverb was also attested in Marra in recent documentation.

Example 5 was not elicited but stemmed from an attempt to carry out the ‘Family Problems’ picture task (San Roque et al. 2012) with two Marra speakers.

(5)  

```
ninya bardarda *jarlu*-warriganja
```

*this*[M] infant lead.by.arm-3DL:‐{‐ganji}];PRS

They (two) are leading the baby by his arm.
Most young Kriol speakers who were interviewed recognised and could define this verb, although there are indications that it is not widely used by younger speakers. It was not previously documented as a Kriol verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANGUMANGU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English gloss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalents in other substrates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mangumangu* was previously documented in Kriol and semantic equivalents were documented in three substrate languages. Of those three, Marra and Nunggubuyu have the same form, while Ngalakgan uses an unrelated form, *marrambah*. Heath notes that in Marra and Nunggubuyu, *mangumangu* is a nominal. Recent Marra documentation confirms this, as in:

(6) *day-warrima wurr-mangumangu*  
  flee-3PL:do;PST;PUNCT DL-in elopement  
  They (two) ran away in elopement.

Kriol speakers are very familiar with this lexeme and use it as a verb, demonstrated by the following definition offered by one young man:

(7) *wen yu mangumangu gel... yu ranawei gada gel*  
  when 2SG elope girl 2SG run.away with girl  
  la. yu gada gel la natha kantri? yu gin  
  thus 2SG with girl LOC other place 2SG can  
  *mangumangu im thanija.*  
  elope 3SG that:there  
  When you elope (with) a girl. You run away with a girl, like that. (If) you have a girlfriend in another place? (Then) you can elope (with) her.

Given that semantic equivalents were not documented in a number of substrate languages, a precise etymology cannot be determined, however it is clear that Marra and Nunggubuyu are at least partly attributable to this verb being known to all Kriol speakers.
### MIRNIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>vi. blink; flash (of light). Location: Ngukurr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Widely known. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Marra: <em>mirnim</em> (coverb): '(lightning) to flash'. Alawa: <em>mirnim</em> (coverb): 'twinkle (of star)'. Ngandi: <em>mirnim-dhu</em> (v.): '(lightning) to flash'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: <em>mirnim</em> (coverb): '(lightning) to flash'. Alawa: <em>mirnim</em> (coverb): 'twinkle (of star)'. Ngandi: <em>mirnim-dhu</em> (v.): '(lightning) to flash'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</td>
<td>Alawa: <em>marrngab</em> (coverb): 'lightning, flash lightning'. Marra: <em>miliw</em> (coverb): '(lightning) to flash'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Widely known. Possibly restricted to Roper Kriol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verb *mirnim* is known to all Kriol speakers and appears to be in current use. Various speakers used the example of lightning in clouds – *wen laitning mirnim-mirnim la top* 'when lightning flashes in the sky' – or used a definition such as *onenofbat* ‘on-and-off:PROG’, as in 'going on and off'. Note that *mirnim* complements *gululu* ‘thunder, make grumbling noise’, to create a pair of non-English derived verbs that correspond to the English ‘thunder and lightning’.

In documentation of substrate languages, *mirnim* is attested in Marra, Alawa and Ngandi. Semantic equivalents were not found in documentation of other languages so it is not known how widespread the form was across all local languages. Given that Ngandi and Marran languages are unrelated and share relatively few cognates, *mirnim* may have been common across a number of languages and hence been a good candidate for reinforcement and transfer into the emerging creole.

### MUNYURRUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>refine, grind, mince, make into paste, crush</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kriol Dikshenri</td>
<td>Not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Marra: <em>munyurr</em> (coverb): 'to be or become soft, etc.', <em>munyurr</em> (n.): 'soft; fine (e.g. flour); smooth, without lumps or bumps.' Nunggubuyu: <em>munyurrqa</em> (v.tr.): 'to soften up (e.g., fruit, by pounding'), <em>munyurr, munyurrq</em> (adj.): 'in small pieces; fine (like flour); soft, smooth'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology</td>
<td>Marra: <em>munyurr</em> (coverb): 'to be or become soft, etc.', <em>munyurr</em> (n.): 'soft; fine (e.g. flour); smooth, without lumps or bumps.' Nunggubuyu: <em>munyurrqa</em> (v.tr.): 'to soften up (e.g., fruit, by pounding'), <em>munyurr, munyurrq</em> (adj.): 'in small pieces; fine (like flour); soft, smooth'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</td>
<td>Alawa, Warndarrang, Ngalakgan: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Munyurr* is attested in Marra, Nunggubuyu, Ngandi and Ritharrŋu, although only in Marra and Nunggubuyu is it attested as a verb. In Marra and Nunggubuyu, it appears as both a nominal and a coverb, as in the following Marra example from recent documentation,
taken from a narrative on traditional ways of making fire, in reference to using soft, fine grass as ignition fuel:

(8)  
\[
\text{munyurr-wiliganji} \quad \text{wur-wilanji} \\
\text{refine-3PL>3SG(-ganjii);PST;CONT} \quad \text{put-3PL>3SG;(-ganjii);PST;CONT} \\
\text{guda} \quad \text{wala-mindini} \\
\text{that's_all} \quad \text{3PL-do;PST;CONT}
\]
They would make it soft and they'd put it down, okay, they'd be doing that.

It was not previously documented in Kriol but appears to be widely known. For example, it occurred naturally in one person's description of a bush medicine preparation:

(9)  
\[
\text{yu jis munyurruma det lif pat en det bak} \\
\text{2SG just refine:TR:up the leaf part and the bark}
\]
You just refine the leaves and bark (into small fine pieces).

Interestingly, the Kriol verb provides a rare example of a non-English based verb taking Kriol verbal morphology other than the commonly occurring progressive suffix -\text{bat}. The transitive suffix -\text{um} appears to be part of the verb's lexicalised form, making it one of only two verbs described in Chapter 4 to feature this morphology (the other being \text{nyangarrim} 'be selfish'). In (9), it also takes the adverbial suffix -\text{ap} 'up'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NYIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English gloss</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Diksheni</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The semantics of \text{nyip} are not adequately covered by any English term. In Kriol, the verb can be defined gesturally (see §4.8 for further discussion of such verbs), with fingertips of one hand drawn quickly together with the hand simultaneously drawn towards body or angled sideways. The gesture connotes the tightening, closing off or withdrawal aspects of the verb. These core aspects of the verbs semantics can then be extended to
incorporate the commonly understood meaning of *nyip* in relation to fear or being frightened. The fear aspect is tied to the primary semantics of the verb which describe the restriction or inability to proceed with an intended action or movement. Examples given by Kriol speakers to describe *nyip* include being hesitant to get involved in heavy contact during football, being afraid of evil forces (i.e. *dibuldibul* ‘devil-devil’) or reneging on a threat to fight someone. Some also reported a nominalised compound featuring *nyip*: *nyip-gunawan* (literally: shutdown-shit:NMLZ) which was translated as ‘chicken shit’.

As shown in the survey of substrate languages tabulated above, *nyip* and cognate forms are found in most local languages with semantics that relate to the range of meanings described for the Kriol verb. The exact form, *nyip* (or *nyib*, in Marra and Alawa orthographies) is only attested in Marra and Alawa, suggesting that Marran languages are perhaps more significant factors leading to this verb’s presence in Kriol.

### WARL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>like, covet, desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>v. desire; like; covet. Location: Ngukurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Very common. Used and known to all speakers. Also occurs in Barunga Kriol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etymology</strong></td>
<td>Marra: <em>warl</em>- (coverb): to strongly desire, to crave (Heath 1981: 478) Ngalakgan: <em>warl-ga-</em>‘to love, to be very fond of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic equivalents in other substrates</strong></td>
<td>Yolŋu Matha: <em>wanaŋa</em>: ‘desire, longing’ Warndarrang: <em>nyal</em>- (coverb) ‘to want (?)’ Nunggubuyu: <em>=ngaynbanda</em>- ‘to like, enjoy, want’, <em>=waŋmarra</em>- ‘to crave (something), to want (something) badly, to be very eager for (something)’, <em>=daarraja</em>- ‘to be anxious to get (something), to yearn or lust for (especially, someone else’s property)’ Alawa, Ngandi: ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A very common Kriol verb, *warl* (often reduplicated to *warlwarl*) prototypically refers to sexual desire, as in the following dialogue that was invented during an interview to demonstrate its use:

(10) "det gel jeya im *warlwarlbat* la mi
that girl there 3SG have_desire[REDUP]:PROG LOC 1SG
jeya lu.” "kaman dijei" ail lagijat na im.
there see come here 1SG[FUT] thus LOC 3SG
"That girl there has the hots for me, there see?”. I’ll be like "come here” to her.

The verb occurs in Ngalakgan and is also obviously also related to the Marra coverb, as documented by Hale (1959):
In Kriol, *warl* is not restricted to human referents but is also commonly used in reference to inanimate objects and is not restricted to the sense of attraction or sexual desire. Its ubiquity in Kriol is further evidenced by it being listed and accurately defined in the *Kriol Dikshenri*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YALALA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English gloss</strong></td>
<td>be satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriol Dikshenri</strong></td>
<td>adj. satisfied; pleased. Location: Ngukurr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>Common in Roper Kriol. Also known in Barunga Kriol?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Etymology**                    | Marra: *yalala* (coverb) 'to be happy'  
|                                  | Ngalakgan: *yalala* (thematic verb) to get better, to be alright (Merlan 1983: 216)  
|                                  | See also:  
|                                  | Nunggubuyu: =waḷalarra 'to be happy'  
| **Semantic equivalents in other substrates** | Alawa: *nyingaya yumarr* (coverb): 'be happy, satisfied'  
|                                  | Ngandi: *jal-mak-dhi* 'to feel good', *ngorh-mak-dhi* 'to be happy', *midhamh-dhu* 'to be pleased (e.g. by success in hunting)'  
|                                  | Ritharrŋu/Wägilak: *ŋamakuli* 'good'.  
|                                  | Warndarrang: ?  

*Yalala* is widely known to Kriol speakers in Ngukurr, as suggested by its presence in the *Kriol Dikshenri*. It occurs in both Marra and Ngalakgan in the exact form with closely related semantics. The semantically-related Nunggubuyu verb with the root *foom* *waḷalarra* is probably also cognate. No example data is offered here as no suitable examples of this verb appear in the corpora used for this study.

---

113 Nor is it restricted to being a male-centric verb as suggested by the three examples given above which by coincidence have all come from men.
All local languages contain verbs with similar or exact form and semantics to the Kriol verb *yarr(yarr)*, meaning ‘scatter’ or ‘disperse’, suggesting the verb could have been reinforced by speakers of different substrate languages and subsequently transferred into Kriol.

In Marra, Heath lists two coverbs that may relate to the Kriol verb: *yarr* ‘to lose something’ and *yarrng* ‘to split up, go in different directions’. Following Heath's definitions, *yarrng* – with a velar nasal coda not found in the Kriol verb – is semantically closer to the Kriol *yarr* than the other Marra coverb listed, which has the same form as the Kriol verb but semantics (‘to lose (something)’) that are less closely related. However, Heath's definition of *yarr* does not closely accord with the example documented by Hale (1959: 277–278):

(14) **yarr-yarr-ujunjuni**  
na-walulu  
ngijari-ni  
wambi  
scatter-scatter-3SG:(-ujunjuni);PST;CONT  
M[OBL]-wind  
1SG[OBL]-PURP  
**humpy**  
The wind blew my house (humpy) away.

(Hale 1959: 277–278, translation altered, glossing added)

In (14), the semantics of the Marra coverb *yarr* appear to correspond more closely to the semantics of the Kriol verb of the same form. Humpies are semi-permanent structures and, if they were to be destroyed by wind, would likely have its disintegrated parts strewn over some distance. The Kriol verb *yarr* would similarly describe such an event. Kriol speakers recognise this verb readily including a young person I spoke to who speaks the Barunga Kriol variety. She used an example of dropping a handful of coins and having them go in all directions, an example that succinctly captures the semantics of the
Kriol verb *yarr*. Yet the presence of *yarr* cannot be attributed solely to Marra or Marran languages as similar forms are common in all substrate languages.
APPENDIX 11 – KINTERMS IN CONTEMPORARY ROPER KRIOL

To complement the discussion provided in Chapter 5 and in particular §5.3.1, the table below presents a full list of the kinterms in current use by young adults in Ngukurr. It provides the following information: kinterm, previous attestation in the *Kriol Dikshenri* (Lee 2004) and in Nicholls (2009: 64), referent(s) and comments on usage and pragmatics. This table presents data that conveys a more nuanced and dynamic system than has previously been documented. Of particular importance are three kinterms *muluri*, *gudi* and *gabarani* that were not previously documented and which are discussed in some detail in Chapter 5. The information regarding the referent(s) of each kinterm is provided using kinship abbreviations (refer to list of abbreviations used). Readers should be reminded that these kinterms also apply to classificatory, non-consanguineal kin and are not restricted to the affinal and consanguineal kin as perhaps implied by the use of kinship abbreviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>baba</em></td>
<td>Si, Br, MoSiCh, FaBrCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, some male speakers prefer <em>braja</em></td>
<td>sibling; brother; sister</td>
<td>sibling/brother, sister, parallel cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>braja</em></td>
<td>Br, FaBrSo</td>
<td>common</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>[included in above definition]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>blouk</em></td>
<td>Br, FaBrSo</td>
<td>pragmatically restricted, casual speech, used by males</td>
<td>(not associated with Ngukurr)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sista</em></td>
<td>Si, MoSiDa</td>
<td>common</td>
<td>sister; female offspring of mother’s sister and father’s brother</td>
<td>[included in above definition]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>rabish</em></td>
<td>♂Si, ♂MoSiDa</td>
<td>marked usage, male speech only, connotes taboo/avoidance relationship</td>
<td>sister; woman; old people</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>barn.ga</em></td>
<td>MoBrCh, FaSiCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal</td>
<td>cousin; kinship relation</td>
<td>‘cross’ cousin (children of father’s sister or mother’s brother) (N.B. as <em>barngga</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kas</em></td>
<td>MoBrCh, FaSiCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, relatively recent borrowing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[included in above definition]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Usage Notes</td>
<td>Role 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>waif</strong></td>
<td>Wi</td>
<td>not used with classificatory kin</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td>wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>husben</strong></td>
<td>Hu</td>
<td>not used with classificatory kin</td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>mit</strong></td>
<td>Wi, WiSi, WiBr, Hu, HuBr, HuSi</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, classificatory kin only</td>
<td>&quot;meit&quot;: 1. friend 2. spouse</td>
<td>spouse (N.B) as mit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>banji</strong></td>
<td>WiSi, WiBr, HuBr, HuSi</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, classificatory kin only</td>
<td>in-law or person of that category; brother-in-law; sister-in-law; spouse</td>
<td>brother-in-law/sister-in-law, also spouse/marriageable person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fren</strong></td>
<td>WiSi, WiBr, HuBr, HuSi</td>
<td>marked kinterm, casual uages, classificatory kin only, vocative only?</td>
<td>friend; best mates</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>genga</strong></td>
<td>WiBr</td>
<td>used by young speakers, possibly only used between classificatory male brother-in-law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>san</strong></td>
<td>So, BrSo, SiSo</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>son; man’s son; brother’s son</td>
<td>son (also sons of ego's brothers - when ego is male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dota</strong></td>
<td>Da, BrDa, SiDa</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>daughter; classificatory daughter, female of the same skin as one's daughter</td>
<td>daughter (also daughters of ego's brothers - when ego is male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>boi</strong></td>
<td>So, SiSo, BrSo</td>
<td>becoming less common</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>gel</strong></td>
<td>Da, SiDa, BrDa</td>
<td>becoming less common</td>
<td>1. girl 2. sister’s daughter 3. female 4. woman</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nis</strong></td>
<td>SiDa, BrDa</td>
<td>common, mostly referential</td>
<td>niece</td>
<td>daughter of ego's sisters (when ego is male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nefyu</strong></td>
<td>SiSo, BrSo</td>
<td>common, mostly referential</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>son of ego's sisters (when ego is male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>gudi</strong></td>
<td>Fa, FaSi, So, BrSo</td>
<td>self-reciprocal, recent borrowing, not usually applied to close or senior kin, also used as sympathy response cry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>Self-reciprocal, recent borrowing, not usually applied to close or senior kin, also used as sympathy response cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabarani</td>
<td>♂MoBr, ♀SiSo</td>
<td>common, preferred term for close kin (cf. <em>gudi/gabarani</em>)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mami</td>
<td>Mo, MoSi</td>
<td>common, preferred term for close kin (cf. <em>gudi/gabarani</em>)</td>
<td>mother; mother’s sister; and person in the same skin group as one’s mother</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dedi</td>
<td>Fa, FaBr</td>
<td>common, preferred term for close kin (cf. <em>gudi/gabarani</em>)</td>
<td>“dadi”: father; father’s brothers</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti</td>
<td>FaSi</td>
<td>common, preferred term for close kin (cf. <em>gudi/gabarani</em>)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>aunt (father’s sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anggurl</td>
<td>MoBr</td>
<td>common, preferred term for close kin (cf. <em>gudi/gabarani</em>)</td>
<td>mother’s brother, uncle</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amuri</td>
<td>FaFa, FaFaBr, FaFaSi, ♀SoCh, BrSoCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal</td>
<td>father’s father (also listed as “ngamuri”)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abuji</td>
<td>FaMo, FaMoBr, FaMoSi, ♂SoCh, BrSoCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal</td>
<td>father’s mother</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abija</td>
<td>MoFa, MoFaBr, MoFaSi, ♂DaCh, BrDaCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal</td>
<td>father’s mother, mother’s father</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gagu</td>
<td>MoMo, MoMoBr, MoMoSi, SiDaCh, ♀DaCh</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, joking relationship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>grandmother (mother’s mother) and their siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lambarra</td>
<td>♂WiFa, ♀HuFa, ♀DaHu, ♀SoWi</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal</td>
<td>father-in-law</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muluri</td>
<td>♂WiMoBr, ♀SiDaHu</td>
<td>common, self-reciprocal, used between male speakers</td>
<td>“murlurri”: cousin</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other kinterms listed in Lee (2004) and Nicholls (2009) not attested by young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marli</td>
<td>(not associated with Ngukurr)</td>
<td>mother-in-law (&quot;poison cousin&quot;), son/daughter-in-law</td>
<td>Used in &quot;Westside&quot; Kriol, also Gurindji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munyumunyu</td>
<td>sister’s son; wife’s father; father-in-law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marra kinterm, not used by young speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nibali</td>
<td>sister’s son</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marra kinterm, not used by young speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mula</td>
<td>mother; daughter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Used in Barunga Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaggag</td>
<td>mother’s mother</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Used in Barunga Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greni</td>
<td>mother’s mother; mother’s mother’s brothers and sisters; (woman speaking) daughter’s children; (man speaking) sister’s daughter’s children</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Used in VRD or ‘westside’ Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grensan</td>
<td>grandson</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘Light’ Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grendoda</td>
<td>granddaughter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘Light’ Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grenbaja</td>
<td>father’s father</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamman</td>
<td>mother’s father; father’s mother</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Used in Barunga Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abijaja</td>
<td>mother’s father</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marra kinterm, not used by young speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abirnini</td>
<td>kinship relationship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marra kinterm, not used by young speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyapaja</td>
<td>old in-law; (kinship term for an old man who is in banjimen relationship)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngabinin</td>
<td>kind of kinship relationship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marra kinterm, not used by young speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 12 – YOUNG PEOPLE’S BUSH MEDICINE SURVEY

The following is a reproduction of the survey described in §7.2 that resulted in the small quantitative study of bush medicine use and knowledge among young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr. Despite the survey structure and question being written in English, the surveys were delivered orally and interpreted/delivered in Kriol via interviews which were recorded and transcribed.

Bush medicine survey

1. Name all the types of Bush Medicine that you know
2. Think of the last time you used bush medicine and tell me about it
   • when was this, who collected it, prepared it
3. Think of the last time you prepared bush medicine and tell me about it
4. Think of the last time you were sick and tell me about it
   • what did you do to treat it? clinic? bush medicine?
5. Listen to these plant names and tell me if you’ve heard of it and what you know about it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnarr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabultri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunarlarla</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gayabam</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Burduga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirringgirl-dirringgirl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushanyin, Wailanyin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dugul / Dugurlarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souptri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbuyumbu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gariri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnamurru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boi shugabeg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gawurrwa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grawun shugabeg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karapas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyiya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogbul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarnnyin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladwud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jirrama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarlarra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayarranja</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mijirr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudju</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdirdi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalangga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please make a list of your Top 5 bush medicines and talk about your choices.

**Personal details**

1. Gender
2. Age
3. L1
4. Other languages and proficiency
   - 
   - 
   - 
5. Occupation and education (if relevant)
   - 
   - 
   - 
6. Name (optional)

---

**Metadata**

Date: Location:

Filename:

Other notes:
Survey Information

This survey is to find out what young Kriol speakers in Ngukurr know about bush medicine and how much they use bush medicine.

This survey is a small part of the work I am doing at university in Canberra. I am writing a big book about Marra and Kriol and the part about bush medicine is a small part of this book.

You should only do this survey if you are happy to do it. If you don't want to do it, then you can leave it. Also, if you do it but then later on change your mind then tell me or tell the Language Centre and I'll throw away your answers and any recordings.

Read these sentences and if you agree, then put a tick:

☐ I understand what this survey is about and am happy to answer these questions
☐ I am also happy to be recorded while I'm answering the questions
☐ I am happy for my answers to be part of Wamut's study but I don't want him to use my name (I want my answers to be anonymous)
☐ I am happy for my answers to be part of Wamut's study and I'm happy for him to use my name in his book too
☐ I am interested to find out what Wamut learns from me and the other people he interviews. Please send me some of Wamut's work about what young people in Ngukurr know about Bush Medicine

Name: ____________________________________________
Signed: __________________________________________
Date: ___/___/_____
Infameishin bla dismob Kwesjin

Dismob kwesjin, thei garra dalim mi wanim yang pipul la Ropa sabi bla bush medisin, en if yangpipul yusumbat.

Dismob kwesjin, im oni lilbit ob det bigis wek mi dumbat la yunibesidi la Canberra. Mi raidimbat bigiswan buk blanga Marra and Kriol. En bush medisin im onli lilwan part la det buk.

Yu nomo lafta anserim dismob kwesjin, oni if yu wandim. If yu nomo wandim, yu gin libum. O maitbi yu dwum en den afta na yu bin tjeinjim main, yu gin dalim mi o dalim Language Centre en den ai garra tjakidaweı ola ensa ba yu en eni rekoding.

Ridim dismob sentens en pudum tik if yu agree:

☐ Ai sabi wotfo Wamut askimbat dismob kwesjin en mi hepi ba enserim ola kwesjin.

☐ Mi hepi du ba Wamut ba rekodim mi wen mi gibit ola ensa.

☐ Im rait det Wamut garra yusum ola ensi ai gibit en yusum bla im stadi la yunabesidi. Bat ai nomo wandim im ba pudum main neim ja.

☐ Im rait det Wamut garra yusum ola ensi ai gibit en yusum bla im stadi la yunabesidi. En im rait ba im ba pudum main neim ja la im buk du.

☐ Mi intresting ba faindat wanim Wamut bin lern from mela ola yangpipul hu bin tok la im. Jendim im wek la mi, bla wanim yangpipul la Ropa sabi bla bush medisin.

Neim: __________________________________________________

Sainim: __________________________________________________

Deit: ___/___/_______
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