

From Ethical Datives to Number Markers in Murriny Patha¹

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1. Introduction

Australian languages provide fascinating examples of cultural preoccupations selecting for linguistic structures. One such example is the emergence of syntactic structures reflecting kinship systems. McConvell (1985a, b) has shown that bilingualism and practices of wife-bestowal amongst speakers of different language groups gave rise to subsection terms from earlier section terms. Triangular kin terms, clan-lects, moiety-lects and ‘mother-in-law’ registers have evolved independently in languages that aren’t closely related. This ‘kintax’ can be conceived as resulting from processes of co-evolution that see cultural innovation and emergent linguistic structures develop through patterns of positive feedback². Murriny Patha is a fine example of an Australian language that has taken a culture specific notion and evolved distinctions that pervade throughout all the pronominals, free and bound, and hence right into what is conceivably the beating heart of the language, the polysynthetic verb.

Murriny Patha is spoken at Wadeye (formerly Port Keats) and surrounding communities in the Daly region of the Northern Territory of Australia. In this region the language has grown to be a lingua franca and as such has over two thousand speakers. Along with neighbouring Ngan’gityemerri, Green (2003) convincingly reclassified the language as belonging to the Southern Daly family of non-Pama-Nyungan languages, after it was previously thought to be a genetic isolate.

As is typical of a number of the Daly languages, Murriny Patha makes a four way number distinction: singular, dual, paucal and plural. However the language is unusual in that it also makes a sibling versus non-sibling distinction for dual and paucal participants, and in this respect differs from its eastern neighbour Ngan’gityemerri³. The sibling/non-sibling distinction is made through the presence or absence of dual and paucal non-sibling number marking morphemes that combine with subject and object-marking

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper: adj = adjective, adv = adverbial, anaph = anaphoric demonstrative, Cas = case, Cov = coverb, Dat = dative, dauc = ‘daucal’ – dual/paucal (ie. between 2 and ~10), dem = demonstrative, dTrans = detransitiviser, DO = direct object, du = dual, ED = ethical dative, Erg = ergative, Emph = emphatic, ex = exclusive, f = feminine, FinV = finite verb, Fut = future, inc = inclusive, Inch = inchoative, Int = interrogative, IO = indirect object, Intens = intensifier, Irr = irrealis, m = masculine, nFut = non-future, noun = noun, NomCl = nominal classifier, nPst = non-past, ns = non-singular, nsib = non-siblings, Num = number, num = numeral, Part = particle, pauc = paucal, PImp = past imperfective, PrName = proper name, Pro = Free Pronoun, Pst = past, Recip = reciprocal, s = singular, S = subject, SerFinV = serial finite verb, sib = siblings, Tns = tense, Top = topicaliser, Voc = vocative.

² See Evans (2003) for a review of culturally specific linguistic structure and terminology in Australian languages emerging from specific cultural preoccupations. The paper uses these examples to argue against the hard-wired ‘universalist’ view that linguistic diversity is constrained by biologically given principles as a result of adjusting various parameter settings (ie. Chomsky, 1980; Pinker, 1994; Bickerton 1995).

³ Ngan’gityemerri, also differs from Murriny Patha in that it marks trial, rather than paucal (Reid 1990).

pronominals. The dual and paucal non-sibling number marking morphemes also indicate gender (all male vs at least one female).

In this paper I offer an explanation for how Murriny Patha may have innovated this unusual three-way opposition (groups of siblings vs groups of all male non-siblings vs groups of non-siblings including at least one female). In §6, I propose that two members of a no-longer productive series of ethical dative bound pronouns were reanalysed as dual non-sibling number markers, thus enabling a gender distinction to be made for dual non-sibling referents. For evidence, I will draw on some archival manuscripts from the 1950s as well as some recent textual data, much of which comes from recordings of natural conversation. This textual data includes some fortuitous attestations of the ethical dative series of bound pronouns, which in 21st century Murriny Patha has a very marginal status indeed. It is the archival data that provides a lucky snapshot of the final stages of grammaticalisation, a process that by now is largely complete.

Although the aim of this paper is primarily to account for the Murriny Patha dual number markers, the question of the paucal number markers is not irrelevant. Murriny Patha has two paucal number markers, *-neme* for arguments comprising groups of approximately three to ten males (paucal masculine, *paucm*) and *-ngime* for arguments comprising groups of approximately three to ten participants which include at least one female (paucal feminine, *paucf*)⁴. There is one other stipulation, namely that these number markers are used only when the expressed group of participants are not siblings. Ngan’gityemerri on the other hand, marks trial rather than paucal and it doesn’t care about siblings. For arguments comprising three participants, it doesn’t mark gender, since it has just one trial number marker, *-nime* (Reid, 1990). In spite of these differences, the functional and positional similarities in the verb complex as well as the similarity in form, show that the Ngan’gityemerri trial number marker and the Murriny Patha paucal number markers are clearly cognates (cf. 1 and 2).

1. (NgTy)

Alayi warrakma kinyi werrmengipulnimetye.

alayi	warrakma	kinyi	werrme	-ngi	-pul	-nime	-tye
mother	three	this	3plS.hands	-1sDO	-wash	-trial	-Pst
noun	numeral	dem	FinV	-DO	-Cov	-Num	-Tns

‘These three mothers of mine used to wash me.’ (Reid, 1990: 225)

2. (MP)

Pubanngiwethukngime.

puban	-ngi	-wethuk	-ngime
3daucS.17.nFut	-1sDO	-blame	-pauc.f.nsib
FinV	-DO	-Cov	-Num

‘They (paucal feminine non-siblings) blamed me.’ (JB2005FN3, 61)

The question arises: did proto-Southern Daly have just a single trial/paucal number marker like Ngan’gityemerri and did Murriny Patha go on to innovate gender marking in the paucals? Alternatively, did the proto-language already make a gender distinction that

⁴ By rights, the gender distinction in Murriny Patha is technically not a ‘masculine’ vs. ‘feminine’ distinction so much as a ‘masculine’ vs. ‘non-masculine’ distinction. In spite of this, I’ll persist with the label ‘feminine’.

Ngan’gityemerri subsequently went on to lose? Unfortunately, in the absence of a clear source for the trials/paucals, there is not a lot of hard evidence for either proposition, though in §5 and §7, I will return to this question and propose two plausible accounts for these morphemes. The main aim of this paper is to account for the dual numbers and it is here that I find considerable evidence for grammaticalisation.

2. Three series of ‘Object’ pronominals

Modern Murriny Patha has two productive series of ‘object’ pronominals, a direct object series and an indirect object series⁵. The forms of the direct object and indirect object series are listed in Table 2.

		DO	IO
Singular	1	-ngi	-nga
	2	-nyi	-mba
	3f	-Ø	-nge
	3m	-Ø	-na
1 Inclusive		-nyi	-nye
dual & paucal non-sibling (“daucal”)	1	-ngan’gu	-ngarru
	2	-nan’gu	-narru
	3	-n’gu	-rru
		-wun’gu ⁶	-wirru ⁶
Plural & paucal sibling	1	-ngan	-ngarra
	2	-nan	-narra
	3	-n	-rra
		-wun ⁶	-wirra ⁶

Table 1. The Direct Object and Indirect Object series

In transitive constructions human patients are marked by the direct object pronominals. In the verbal template, they occur between a highly fusional finite verb (which encodes categories such as subject, verb class, tense, mood, aspect and stance) and the coverb (which encodes the bulk of the lexical meaning of the verb).

3.

Panngibatkanam nigunuyu.

pan	-ngi	-bat	=kanam	nigunu	-yu
3sS.23.nFut	-1sDO	-hit	=3sS.4_be.nFut	3sf	-??
FinV	-DO	-Cov	=SerFinV	Pro	-Part

⁵ I will use the term ‘object’ as a cover term for the direct object series, the indirect object series and the ethical dative series. Strictly speaking, the expressed arguments are not always objects, but it is useful to morphologically group these series and distinguish them from the finite verb forms, which express subjects.

⁶ Diachronically, the short forms of 3rd person daucal and plural objects are derived from the long forms although synchronically they may be considered variants. The short forms are found in verbs of all tenses except non-future, ie. all tenses where the finite verb ends in a vowel. In non-future tense verbs, the bilabial glides are realised as stops following the final nasals of the non-future finite verb forms. The underlying /w/ surfaces in non-verbal constructions such as in 8.

‘She was beating me.’ (2004-09-12JB04.txt, 0230.604)

The marking of number in Murriny Patha is a complicated issue that will be dealt with more thoroughly in §3. However, for the moment it suffices to say that if an argument expressed by direct or indirect object is dual and non-sibling, then the object pronominal is morphologically underspecified as to whether it is dual or paucal – it might be two, it might be a few. However, it is the addition of a dual non-sibling number marker that gives specificity to this underspecified ‘daucal’ direct object and and constrains the reading to two (and not a few). There are two dual non-sibling number markers, *-nintha* for two male participants and *-ngintha* for two participants, at least one of whom is female.

4.

Mampirruwardanintha.

mam	-wirru	-warda	-nintha
3sS.8.say.nFut	-3daucIO	-then	-du.m.nsib
FinV	-IO	-adv	-Num

‘He said to the two boys (who weren’t brothers).’ (2004-08-08JB03b2.txt, 849438_850860)

In 4, the third person daucal indirect object, *-wirru*, in combination with the masculine dual non-sibling number marker, *-nintha*, expresses the recipient of the talk as two males (who weren’t brothers).⁷

The direct objects are also used in impersonal constructions, a quasi-transitive construction (Walsh, 1987), where a dummy third person singular subject acts on an experiencer expressed by a direct object pronominal.

5.

Pelpitj mamngingkawurldim.

pelpitj	mam	-ngi	-ngkawurl	=dim
head	3sS.8.do_w_hands.nFut	-1sDO	-give_headache	=3sS.1_sit.nFut
noun	FinV	-DO	-Cov	=SerFinV

‘I’ve got a headache.’ (Lit: it gives me a headache). (2004-07-04JB01.txt, 1793.116)

Analogous to the impersonal verbs, there are also a number of nominally predicating expressions where a stative subject (6) or an experiencer subject (7) is expressed by a direct object pronominal. Walsh (1996a) gives an account of a range of these predicating nominal constructions that exhibit morphology generally associated with the polysynthetic verb. He shows that the constructions are intermediate between those in the language that are prototypically verbal and those that are prototypically nominal. It is

⁷ The way Murriny Patha groups dissimilar elements creates all sorts of problems for nomenclature and the proposed ‘daucal’ is a good example. The range of potential referents expressed by the morphemes glossed ‘daucal’ in object position includes dual siblings, dual non-siblings, paucal non-siblings but not paucal siblings (refer Table 7). In subject position, morphemes glossed ‘daucal’ refer to dual-siblings and paucal non-siblings but not to dual non-siblings nor paucal siblings. In spite of this disparity, I prefer to coin the succinct term ‘daucal’ with its succinct gloss (ie. 3daucS) rather than a clumsy alternative (ie. 3du.sib/pauc.nsibS).

quite common for these expressions to include an incorporated body part, often with a metaphorical reading⁸.

6.

Dertemamnyidhay.

dertemam	-nyi	-dhay
hard	-2sDO	-mouth
adj	-DO	-IBP

‘You’re a hard person’ (you always say no to requests). (JB2004FN, 91)

7.

Ngay kardu ninggeninggemardanggu.

ngay	kardu	ninggeningge	-ngi	-marda	-nggu
1s	human	jealous	-1sIO	-belly?	-??
Pro	NomCl	root	-IO	-IBP?	-??

‘I’m a jealous person.’ (JB2005FN4, 89)

Example 7 is one of two kinds of constructions based around the inherently reduplicated root, *ninggeningge*, ‘jealous’. The root derives from the coverb *-ngge*, ‘be jealous of’, prefixed by an unanalysable *ni-* (Street 1980, 13). This first group of ‘*ninggeningge* constructions’ usually include a direct object pronominal and the semantically elusive cranberry morpheme, *-mardanggu* (partially analysable as *-marda*, ‘belly’, plus the unanalysable *-nggu*). My consultants explained the above phrase as, ‘I can’t let my wife follow other people’.

In a pattern reminiscent of what we saw in verbs, when the experiencers are dual non-sibling, a dual non-sibling number marker appears to the right of the direct object pronominal as in 8.

8.

Kardu ninggeninggewun’ gumardanggungintha.

kardu	ninggeningge	-wun’gu	-marda	-nggu	-ngintha
human	jealous	-3daucDO	-belly?	-??	-du.f.nsib
NomCl	root	-DO	-IBP?	-??	-Num

‘The two women (non-siblings) are jealous.’ (JB2005FN4, 91)

In 8 the number marker *-ngintha* has the effect of specifying the ‘daucal’ direct object *-wun’gu* as dual feminine and not paucal. The second group of *Ninggeningge* constructions usually includes the morpheme *-patha*. In these constructions, this morpheme probably functions as an intensifier (see examples 9 and 10).

9.

Niyunuka ninggeninggepathamanangintha wurrinidhaya.

nigunu-ka	ninggeningge	-patha	-mana	-ngintha	wurrini	-dha -ya
3sf-Top	jealous	-Intens?	-Intens	-3sf.??	3sS.6_go.PImp	-Pst -Dub
Pro-Part	adj	-adv?	-adv	-??	FinV	-Tns -Part

‘She was very jealous.’ (2004-09-12JB04.txt, 0205.588)

⁸ See also (Walsh 1996a) for an account of body part incorporation and metaphor.

10.

Nukunuka kardu ninggeninggepathanintha.

nukunu-ka	kardu	ninggeningge	-patha	-nintha
3sm-Top	human	jealous	-Intens?	-3sm.??
Pro-Part	NomCl	adj	-adv?	-??

‘He’s a jealous man.’ (JB2005FN4, 89)

The first point to note is that although *-ngintha* and *-nintha* look like the dual non-sibling number markers, they can’t be, because the referents are singular, so they must be something else. In 11 we have a second person singular example.

11.

Nyinyi kardu ninggeninggepathanguntha.

nyinyi	kardu	ninggeningge	-patha	-nguntha
2s	human	jealous	-well?	-2s.??
Pro	NomCl	adj	-adv?	-??

‘You are a jealous person.’ (JB2005FN4, 89)

In Murriny Patha the third person singular direct objects are zero (Table 1), so no direct object pronominals would be expected to surface in either example 9 or 10. However the second person direct object form is *-nyi*, which is conspicuously absent from example 11. The form *-nguntha* is not attested as a number marker so it would appear that rather than the direct objects, these *Ninggeninggepatha* constructions have a new set of pronominals that inflect for person and gender. The forms *-nintha*, *-ngintha* and *-nguntha* resemble forms that appear in a pair of manuscripts from the late Father William Flynn MSC, who was the Catholic priest stationed in Port Keats between 1946 and 1952. In these manuscripts, Flynn (n.d.a, n.d.b) listed three series of ‘object pronouns’ which included the direct object and indirect object series listed in Table 1, as well as a third series which he described as ‘defective’. Flynn’s third series of bound pronouns are listed in Table 2.

1s	-ngantha
2s	-nuntha
3s	-nintha
1duinc	-nyentha
3duf	-winthu -ngintha
3dum	-winthu -nintha
3pl	-wintha

Table 2. Flynn’s 3rd object series.

Flynn believed that the series sometimes had a genitive function and his free translations reflect this.

12.

old MP (c1950)

Nandji bamnganthawurrkpurrk.

nandji	bam	-ngantha	-wurrkpurrk
residue	3sS.18.nFut	-1s??	-break
NomCl	FinV	-??	-Cov

“‘The thing it belonging to me was broken-in-falling’” (Flynn n.d.b, 6)

→ ‘The thing broke on me.’

Notice that the consequences of the thing breaking could be construed as being a negative result for the owner of the thing, just as in English the ‘on me’ expresses an undesirable result; as in, ‘The thing broke on me’. Flynn gave another set of examples using this series that also express a negative result for the participant cross-referenced by these pronominals.

13.

old MP (c1950)

Damnganthawintharrkat.

dam	-ngantha	-wintharrkat
3sS.19.nFut	-1s??	-prevent
FinV	-??	-Cov

‘He prevented me (from doing something).’ (Flynn: n.d.a, 11)

Flynn’s third series turns out to be a no-longer productive series of ethical dative⁹ bound pronouns. These ethical datives express a sort of disadvantage for, or dissatisfaction on the behalf of the experiencer referent, a kind of ‘malefactive’ reading. Similar pronominal series expressing undesirable affects are attested elsewhere in the Daly, although sometimes with different labels¹⁰. It would appear that if the Murriny Patha series was ‘defective’ in the middle of the 20th century, then it is even more marginal in the first decade of the 21st. It has proven very difficult to elicit ethical datives, particularly in verbs, however, the forms do surface occasionally in texts.

14.

⁹ The ‘ethical dative’, ‘ethic dative’ or ‘dativus ethicus’ is sometimes glossed as the ‘dative of feeling’ or the ‘dative of affect’. These datives express a particular interest or concern for a participant who is semantically external to the event. (In Romance languages, the external participant is usually the speaker or the addressee.) For the external participant, the effects may be negative (in which case the ethical dative has a malefactive reading) or positive (where the ethical dative has a benefactive reading). In the case of malefaction, the ethical dative is usually translated into English with ‘on’.

*¡No te **me** vayas!*

Not you **to me** go

‘Don’t walk out on me!’ (Delbecque & Lamiroy, 1996: 107)

Simpson (1991: 380) gives an example from Warlpiri of a positive effect being conveyed through an ethical dative.

<i>Ngarrka-ngku</i>	<i>ka-rla</i>	<i>kurdu-ku</i>	<i>karli</i>	<i>jarnti-rni</i>
Man-Erg	Pres- 3Dat	child- Dat	boomerang	trim-nPst

‘The man is trimming the boomerang for the child.’

¹⁰ Reid (1990: 134) refers to a series of ‘implicated’ pronominals in Ngan’gityemerri whereas Ford (1998: 176) describes an ‘adversative’ series in Emmi. Green (1989: 126-28) describes a series of /anga/ pronominals in Marrithiyel that mark adverse effects but have other functions as well. Since I cannot be sure that the marking of malefaction was the only semantic role expressed by this series, I use the ‘broader’ term ‘ethical dative’.

Nangu kanamnganthapart kanggurl ngay pinggarlma.

Nangu	kanam	-ngantha	-part	kanggurl	ngay	pinggarl	-ma
place_name	3sS.4_be.nFut	-1sED	-leave	father's_father's_sister	1s	knee	-having
noun	FinV	-ED	-Cov	noun	Pro	noun	-Com

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

(2004-09-12JB04.txt, 0059.993)

Further elicitation with this verb failed to yield any other forms. However, the *Ninggeninggepatha* construction proved more useful in fleshing out the forms (Table 3).

		Flynn	Blythe
Singular	1	-ngantha	-ngantha
	2	-nuntha	-nguntha
	3f		-ngintha
	3m	-nintha	-nintha
1 Inclusive		-nyentha	
dual & paucal non-sibling ("daucal")	1		
	2		
	3	-winthu	-winthu
paucal sibling & Plural	1		
	2		
	3	-wintha	

Table 3. Ethical Datives as attested by Flynn and myself.

Apart from the holes in the paradigm, there are a couple of notable differences in the two columns that require examination. Firstly, Flynn’s data lacks a third person feminine singular form. I suspect this is an artifact of the elicitation process. In his free translations, all of the third singular forms are masculine. If Flynn elicited these forms from a man, he may have forgotten to ask for a third person feminine singular form ie, ‘he prevented her’. That would account for why *-ngintha* is missing from his data. Secondly, the initial nasal differs in the second person form (*-nuntha* vs *-nguntha*). Most likely, he failed to hear the nasal as velar¹¹. From the two sources of data we can expand the paradigm.

		Ethical Datives
Singular	1	-ngantha

¹¹ An alternative explanation may be that the once robust *nV-*, masc vs. *ngV-*, fem distinction that we see in Murriny Patha (and throughout the Daly), had a reflex in the 2nd person singular ethical datives (ie. *-nguntha*, 2sfED vs. *-nuntha*, 2smED). My consultants do not make a gender distinction for the second person ethical datives. However, this doesn’t rule out an earlier distinction – perhaps even as recently as sixty years ago. If one did exist, and if Flynn elicited these forms from a man, he would have got masculine forms for both the second and the third person singular ethical datives. Flynn’s ear was pretty good. He generally did perceive velar nasals where I would expect to find them. However, a gender distinction in the second person pronominals would be unprecedented throughout this region, so I’m hesitant to propose such a contrast on the basis of such flimsy evidence.

	2f	-nguntha
	2m	-nuntha
	3f	-ngintha
	3m	-nintha
1 Inclusive		-nyentha
dual & paucal non-sibling ("daucal")	1	
	2	
	3	-winthu
paucal sibling & Plural	1	
	2	
	3	-wintha

Table 4. Ethical Dative Series as reconstructed from Flynn's data and my own.

Now, in Table 5, if we compare the third person singular ethical dative forms with the dual number markers, we see that they are identical. We also can see that the same forms appear in conjunction with the third person dual form *-winthu*.¹²

ethical dative series		dual non-sibling number markers
3sm	-nintha	
3sf	-ngintha	
3dum	-winthu (+ -nintha)	-nintha
3duf	-winthu (+ -ngintha)	-ngintha
3pl	-wintha	

Table 5. Ethical Datives vs. Number markers

Flynn gives two example-sets of the ethical dative series occurring with two separate verbs. What is significant in the following examples (15-19), is the variability in the position of the ethical dative pronominals with respect to the coverb.

15. pre-coverb

Damnganthawintharrkat.

dam -ngantha -wintharrkat

3sS.19.nFut -1sED -prevent

FinV -ED -Cov

'He prevented me' (from doing something). (Flynn: n.d.a, 11)

16. post-coverb

Ngambintharrkatnintha.

ngam -wintharrkat -nintha

1sS.19.nFut -prevent -3smED

FinV -Cov -ED

'I prevented him.' (Flynn: n.d.a, 11)

¹² See example 19.

17. post-coverb
Ngambintharrkatwintha.
 ngam -wintharrkat -wintha
 1sS.19.nFut -prevent -3plED
 FinV -Cov -ED
 ‘I prevented them.’ (Flynn: n.d.a, 11)

18. pre-coverb
Nandji bambinthawurrrpurrrk
 nandji bam -wintha -wurrrpurrrk
 residue 3sS.18.nFut -3plED -break
 NomCl FinV -ED -Cov
 “‘The thing, it belonging to them, broken-in-falling will be.’” (Flynn n.d.b, 6)
 → ‘The thing broke on them.’

19. pre-coverb
Nandji buywinthuwurrrpurrrknunintha.
 nandji buy -winthu -wurrrpurrrk -nu -nintha
 residue 3sS.18Fut -3duED -break -Fut -du.m.nsib
 NomCl FinV -ED -Cov -Tns -Num
 “‘The thing, it belonging to those two broken-in-falling will be.’” (Flynn n.d.b, 6)
 → ‘The thing will break on them (2 males).’

Examples 15-19 demonstrate four things. Firstly, 16 and 17 show ethical datives occurring after the coverb, in the same place as where the number markers go. Secondly, 15 and 18 show ethical datives occurring in a different position, namely in front of the coverb. Thirdly, we find the same plural ethical dative *-wintha* occurring after the coverb in 17 and before the coverb in 18. The other two object series (the direct object and indirect objects) have only one available position, before the coverb. Finally, 19 shows a dual ethical dative occurring before the coverb being specified by a number marker, after the coverb, as dual masculine.

In order to understand how these two positions construct the number of objects and subjects, we need to look at the verbal template and discuss the position of morphemes in more detail.

3. Number Marking in Murriny Patha Verbs

3.1 The verb template

Typically Murriny Patha verbs conform to the template given below.

Murriny Patha Verb Template

FinV - dTms₁ - **Num**₁ - dTms₂ - IBP - **Cov** - Tns - Adv/Part₁ⁿ - **Num**₂ - Adv/Part₂ⁿ = SerFinV - Part

FinV: finite verb – a portmanteau morpheme coding subject, verb class, tense, mood, aspect and stance. This is the only obligatory element in the complex

Num ₁ :	Num ₁ takes a number of dissimilar elements: direct and indirect object bound pronouns, dual non-sibling subject marking and ‘daucal’ subject marking
dTrns:	Detransitiviser: a valency reducing morpheme, encoding reflexive, reciprocal and inchoative functions
IBP:	incorporated body part
Cov:	coverb (possibly reduplicated)
Adv:	adverbial(s)
Tns:	tense
Part:	particle
Num ₂ :	dual/paucal non-sibling number marking
SerFinV:	serial finite verb – also a portmanteau morpheme coding subject, verb class (1-7 only), tense, mood, aspect and stance.

I will limit the discussion to the two positions, Num₁ and Num₂. Number is not the only grammatical category that gets marked in these positions, but it is the only category that all fillers of both slots have in common. The subscripts 1 and 2 capture the notion that the slots are in a combinatorial relationship to each other – both positions work together to mark number and gender. For the discussion of the examples 20-26 refer to Tables 9 and 10 in the Appendices.

3.2 Expressing dual non-sibling objects

As mentioned in §2, the direct and indirect object series occur between the finite verb and the coverb. This is the position I am calling Num₁. In 4 (repeated in 20) we saw that when the referent of a direct object comprises two non-siblings, the numerically underspecified ‘daucal’ direct object in the position Num₁ is further specified as dual by the addition of one of the two dual non-sibling number markers to the right. These go into the position Num₂. So Num₁ and Num₂ work in concert to specify number and gender.

20. (=4) (Pattern 5 in Table 10)

Mampirruwardanintha.

	Num ₁		Num ₂
mam	-wirru	-warda	-nintha
3sS.8_say.nFut	-3daucIO	-then	-du.m.nsib
FinV	-IO	-adv	-Num

‘He said to the two boys (who weren’t brothers).’

(2004-08-08JB03b2.txt, 849438_850860)

3.3 Expressing paucal non-sibling objects

When either the direct object or indirect object is paucal non-sibling, a paucal non-sibling number marker (*-neme*¹³ for referents comprising all male participants and *-ngime* for referents comprising at least one female) is placed in the Num₂ slot, adding further specificity to the numerically underspecified daucal object.

21. (Pattern 6 in Table 10)

¹³ Some speakers use the variant, *-name*.

Ngartat pangu bangamngarruruyngimedharra ngamimarda.

			Num ₁			Num ₂	
Ngartat	pangu	bangam	-ngarru	-ruy	-ngime	-dharra	ngamimarda
place_name	distal	3sS.14.nFut	-1daucexIO	-come_out	-pauc.f.nsib	-moving	other_side
noun	dem	FinV	-IO	-Cov	-Num	-adv	noun

‘She came out to us, on the other side, at Ngartat.’ (2004-09-12JB04.txt, 0071.571)

3.4 Expressing dual sibling objects

When the referent expressed by a direct or indirect object comprises two siblings, the object pronominal goes in the only position it can go, namely the Num₁ slot. The Num₂ slot remains empty.

22. (Pattern 25 in Table 10)

‘Wurda’, thamuny ngay pumampirrupirrimka.

				Num ₁	
wurda	thamuny	ngay	pumam	-wirru	=pirrimka
no	mother's_father	1s	3daucS.8_say.nFut	-3daucIO	=3daucS.1_sit.nFut
Interj	noun	Pro	FinV	-IO	=SerFinV

‘‘No’’, they were saying to my two maternal grandfathers.’

(2005-07-14JB02c.txt, 128923_131089)

3.5 Expressing dual non-sibling subjects

The dual and paucal number marking morphemes behave differently for subjects. If the referent of the subject consists of two non-siblings, then the finite verb is in singular form and a dual non-sibling number marker goes into the first number marking slot Num₁, effectively incrementing the number of the indicated singular subject to two.

23. (Pattern 4 in Table 10)

Thangguguwa damninhangkardu?

			Num ₁	
thanggugu	-wa	dam	-nintha	-ngkardu
what_animate?	-Emph	2sS.13.nFut	-du.m.nsib	-see/look
Int	-Part	FinV	-Num	-Cov

‘What did you two males see?’ (2005-07-14JB02c.txt, 618930_621333)

In verbs with a singular or plural object (ie. non-daucal), for which we can expect a pronominal object argument, the dual non-sibling number marker now appears in the Num₂ slot, rather than in Num₁.

24. (Pattern 3 in Table 10)

Nan'gungintha pana thurdingayitjmaningintha nguwwuminggi.

			Num ₁			Num ₂	
nan'gungintha	pana	thurdi	-nga	-yitj	-mani	-ngintha	nguguminggi
2du.f.nsib	medial	2sS.30.Fut	-1sIO	-tell_story	-be_able	-du.f.nsib	totem_site
Pro	dem	FinV	-IO	-Cov	-modal	-Num	noun

‘Why don’t you two tell me the story about that totem site?’

(2004-07-04JB01.txt, 0429.832)

Indeed the object pronominal, which has only the one potential position in the complex (Num₁), seems to have pulled rank over the dual number marker, relegating it to the Num₂ slot.

3.6 Expressing paucal non-sibling subjects

When the subject is paucal non-sibling, a paucal non-sibling number marker goes into the Num₂ slot, adding further specificity to the numerically underspecified daucal subject (the finite verb).

25. (Pattern 9 in Table 10)

Tjindi marda ngarnewatthangime.

					Num₂
tjindi	marda	ngarne	-wat	-tha	-ngime
place_name	don't	1daucexS.4_be.PstIrr	-go	-Pst	-pauc.f.nsib
noun	Neg	FinV	-Cov	-Tns	-Num

'We didn't go to Tjindi any more.' (2004-08-08JB03b2.txt, 509760_511670)

So whether specifying subjects or objects, *-neme* and *-ngime* only ever occur in Num₂ where as *-nintha* and *-ngintha* can be found in both places.

3.7 Expressing dual-sibling subjects

When the Num₂ slot is empty and the subject of the finite verb is daucal, then the subject number, by default, indicates dual-siblings, as in example 26. Note that in 26 both slots Num₁ and Num₂ are empty.

26. (Pattern 8 in Table 10)

Kardu nyindanu nguminanggayelerrdhangarde.

			Num₁			
kardu	nyinda-nu	ngumina	-Ø	-ngga	-yelerr	-dha =ngarde
human	anaph-Dat	1daucexS.12.PImp	-3sDO	-eye/face	-look_out	-Pst =1daucexS.4_be.PImp
NomCl	dem-Cas	FinV	-DO	-IBP	-Cov	-Tns =SerFinV

'We two sisters were looking at him.' (2005-07-14JB02c.txt, 231591_23339)

The important points to glean from these examples are that the paucal non-sibling number markers *-neme* and *-ngime* can specify both subjects and objects but they only ever occur in the Num₂ slot. The dual number markers *-nintha* and *-ngintha* also specify both subjects and objects, but only in the Num₂ slot. Unlike the paucals, they also appear in Num₁, but when they do, they only ever specify subject number.

In summary:

Num₁

-nintha/-ngintha (S only)

Num₂

-nintha/-ngintha (S/O)

-neme/-ngime (S/O)

4. Position of the Ethical Datives

Let's return to the ethical dative series and consider their position in the verbal template with respect to the coverb. Table 6 presents Flynn's data and that portion of my data that was attested in verbs.

		before coverb	after coverb
singular	1	-ngantha	
	2		-nguntha
	3f	-ngintha	
	3m		-nintha
1 Inclusive		-nyentha	
dual & paucal non-sibling	1		
	2		
	3f	-winthu	(+ -ngintha)
	3m	-winthu	(+ -nintha)
paucal sibling & plural	1		
	2		
	3	-wintha	-wintha

Table 6. Position of Ethical Dative pronominals as attested in verbs.

As mentioned previously in §2, the third plural form *-wintha* was attested by Flynn in two positions, both before and after the coverb. We can also see from the future example in number 21, that the position in Table 6 marked 'after coverb' actually occurs following the tense marker, so it is safe to assume that this position corresponds to Num₂ and also that 'before coverb' corresponds to the position Num₁. However, although the positions are the same, the ethical dative data suggests that the combinatorial relationship between the slots may not always have been what we find today.

Given that the two dual non-sibling number markers *-nintha* and *-ngintha* don't have any strong candidates for cognates in neighbouring languages¹⁴, I propose that earlier Murriny Patha speakers reanalysed two members of the ethical dative series, to arrive at these forms. However, before I outline this process, I'll propose an account for the Southern Daly trials/paucals. This account supposes that the innovation of the gender distinction that we see today in the Murriny Patha paucals, predates the reanalysis of the two ethical datives.

¹⁴ Ford (1998: 126) and Green (2003: 135) suggest that the Murriny Patha dual forms *-nintha* and *-ngintha* are cognate with the two number markers in Emmi, *-ninya*, male augmented and *-nganya*, female augmented. However there are notable differences between the functionality of the Emmi and the Murriny Patha forms. Firstly the Emmi forms denote four or more participants whereas the Murriny Patha forms denote two. Secondly in Emmi, *-ninya* and *-nganya* denote all males and all females respectively, whereas in Murriny Patha *-nintha* and *-ngintha* denote all males vs. at least one female. This pattern is replicated in the paucals. The structural differences between the way the two languages mark gender and number (Emmi has a minimal/augmented system), make the cognate assumption less tenable.

5. Gender marking in the trials/paucals

This account presumes that the Ngan'gityemerri trial, *-nime* is a single reflex of what was a pair of trial/paucal number markers already bearing such a distinction¹⁵. However prior to that, it's possible that proto-Southern Daly, the ancestor of MP and NgTy, had a productive pair of prefixes, ngV- (fem) and nV- (masc), that was affixed to a number marking stem, for instance **-me*. If this happened, we would expect to find reflexes of this distinction elsewhere in the language, which we do (apart from in the number markers) in third singular indirect objects¹⁶ and the third singular ethical datives. The fact that such a distinction has not been attested in any nominals, suggests that such a prefix has not been productive in these languages for a long time although there is evidence for there having been one ancestrally¹⁷.

The second part of this proposal is that some ancestor of modern Ngan'gityemerri had two number markers for either trial or paucal, say **-ngime* (f) and **-nime* (m), and that the distinction was lost by abandoning the feminine form. An examination of trial/paucal/augmented number markers (or inclusive plural number markers – demonstrably the same morpheme) throughout the Daly reveals a number of likely cognate forms, none of which mirror Murriny Patha in preserving an /n/ vs /ng/ gender distinction¹⁸. Given the attestation of such cognate forms, the most likely scenario would be that once NgTy had lost the gender distinction in the trial, the form spread to the other Daly languages by diffusion. This suggestion receives some support from the fact that languages with an attested cognate are all contiguous. This account also receives support from the Murriny Patha adjective *ngamere*, 'several' (that is paucal). Given that there are three suffixes *-re* (ergative, instrumental, temporal), it's possible that the syllable /me/ may be a reflex of the pSD number-marking stem **-me* (as proposed above) and that *nga-* may be a vestige of the once-productive feminine prefix.

6. Reanalysis of the ethical datives

I now propose a reanalysis of the two third singular ethical datives, *-nintha* and *-ngintha* as dual non-sibling number markers. I envisage this reanalysis as having taken place in six distinct stages.

6.1 Stage 1

For the first stage, I propose that Murriny Patha had a fully productive ethical dative series and *-nintha* and *-ngintha* did not exist as number markers, but only as members of this series. I also propose that at this earlier stage, all members of this series may have

¹⁵ In NgTy, *-nime* marks trial for second person, third person and first exclusive. For first inclusive the morpheme marks plural.

¹⁶ Table 1.

¹⁷ An /ng/, feminine vs /n/, masculine distinction in the various object series is well attested throughout the Daly, indeed throughout northern Australia. Ford (1998: 126-27), lists a pair of contrasting prefixes in Emmi, *nga-*, female, *ni-/ne-*, male.

¹⁸ Marrangarr: *-nim*, paucal (Green, 2006); Marri Tjevin, Marri Ammu and Magati Ke: plural (when first person inclusive, Ford pers. comm.); Marramanandji: *-ninimpi*, trial (Tryon, 1974); Marrithiyel: *-nimbini*, trial (Green, 1989). Nb. The Emmi augmented number markers *-nganya*, fem and *-ninya*, masc, do carry a gender distinction, yet appear not to be cognates with this group of trial/paucals.

occurred both before and after the coverb. I don't wish to suggest that their position was not governed at all, only that all members of the series could and did appear in either slot.

In this earlier form of the language, the third person dual form would have been *-winthu*, on its own. It's likely that one or both of the following constructions (27 and 28) would have been permissible.

27.

preMP (Stage 1)

**ngambinharrkatwinthu*

ngam	-wintharrkat	-winthu
1sS.19.nFut	-prevent	-3duED
FinV	-Cov	-ED

'I prevented those two (from doing something).'

28.

preMP (Stage 1)

**ngambinhuwintharrkat*

ngam	-winthu	-wintharrkat
1sS.19.nFut	-3duED	-prevent
FinV	-ED	-Cov

'I prevented those two (from doing something).'

The reconstructions in 27 and 28 would have made no distinction in gender for the adversely affected parties. At this first stage, we must also presume that Murriny Patha would have permitted constructions of the type exemplified by 29.

29.

preMP (Stage 1)

**Ku manganninthart ngarra da.*

ku	mangan	-nintha	-art	ngarra	da
animate	3sS.9.nFut	-3smED	-get/take	Loc	camp
NomCl	FinV	-ED	-Cov	Prep	noun

'He took the meat home, to the other man's disadvantage.'

Modern MP: 'The two men (non-brothers) took the meat home.'

In modern Murriny Patha this sentence would be translated by most speakers as, 'The two men took the meat home', and the malefactive reading for *-nintha* would be an unlikely one. However, even in modern Murriny Patha the malefactive reading for *-nintha* should not be ruled out altogether. As we will see in §8, there are contexts in discourse, where for a certain restricted set of verbs, a malefactive reading is still possible for *-nintha* and *-ngintha* in this position.

6.2 Stage 2

For this second stage, I propose that Murriny Patha speakers were motivated to make a gender distinction between groups of adversely affected dual participants. In order to do this, they exploited the fact that there were two positions in the verbal template for the ethical dative series and so they chose the third person singular ethical datives, because

they distinguish gender, to help them make the distinction. Thus we can reconstruct forms that were similar to the following:

30.

preMP (Stage 2)

**ngambinthewintheharrkatnintha*

ngam	-winthu	-wintheharrkat	-nintha
1sS.19.nFut	-3duED	-prevent	-3smED
FinV	-ED	-Cov	-ED

‘I prevented those two males (from doing something).’

31.

preMP (Stage 2)

**ngambinthewintheharrkatngintha*

ngam	-winthu	-wintheharrkat	-ngintha
1sS.19.nFut	-3duED	-prevent	-3sfED
FinV	-ED	-Cov	-ED

‘I prevented those two females (or one male and one female) (from doing something).’

Since the true nature of the gender contrast in modern Murriny Patha is effectively a masculine vs. non-masculine distinction, we may presume that the motivation for distinguishing groups of adversely effected dual participants, had its origins in activities that pertained particularly to men. Thus the utility was in distinguishing pairs of men from other pairs who were not exclusively male (such as pairs of women, husbands and wives, mothers and children etc.).

6.3 Stage 3

In the third stage I propose that it became so fundamentally useful to distinguish between groups of dual participants that *-nintha* and *-ngintha*, when they occurred in this Num₂ position, became reanalysed as masculine and feminine dual number markers. From here, the use of these number markers was extended to the direct object and indirect object series. I suggest that it was not particularly important to indicate the gender of siblings. Since it wasn’t important, these pairs weren’t marked. This would have been the stage that language got its three-way opposition, dual masculine vs. dual feminine vs. dual siblings. However, quite why it might have been unnecessary to mark the gender of pairs of siblings warrants some exploration.

Paradoxically, although morphologically unmarked by virtue of the absence of the non-sibling number markers, ‘sibling’ is the socially marked category in Murriny Patha¹⁹. As typical of Australian kinship systems, Murriny Patha classificatory kinship incorporates ‘parallel sibling merger’, where a single kinterm is applied to certain sets of siblings (Falkenberg & Falkenberg, 1981: 111-112). For example, the same term *yile* is used for one’s father and one’s father’s brothers. The same term *kale* is used for one’s mother and one’s mother’s sisters. In the next generation, one’s father’s brother’s sons or one’s mother’s sisters’ sons (parallel cousins) are called by the same term as is used for

¹⁹ If the kin-relation between participants is unknown to speakers, then the default category for constructing person reference is ‘non-sibling’.

one's brothers, *ngathan*. A different term, *pugarli*, is used for one's mother's brother's children or father's sister's children (cross-cousins). Parallel sibling merger is a fundamentally important concept to the Murriny Patha²⁰, indeed it is a founding tenet of the kinship system.

In the verb complex (and also in the free pronouns), the gender of pairs of siblings is not marked. The same morphological category can indicate two brothers, two sisters, or a brother and a sister. Presumably, at this third stage of the grammaticalisation process, there must have been social reasons as to why it was unnecessary to mark the gender of pairs of siblings.

What might have been the reasons? The Murriny Patha observe strong taboos on interaction between opposite-sex siblings, except amongst young children (Street, 1987: 32). Thus knowing the gender of pairs of siblings is actually really important. I suggest that the non-marking of something so important can be explained in terms of a lack of social interaction between opposite-sex siblings. The norm is for brothers do things together and for sisters do things together. This behaviour is borne out in my corpus²¹. On this basis, distinguishing the gender of sets of siblings is not particularly beneficial. However, if a brother and a sister were to do something together, this would be a highly marked activity that may warrant scrutiny. Attention could then be brought towards the participants by using the socially marked (although morphologically unmarked) category, 'sibling'. Assuming the cultural preoccupations are not hugely different now from when this proposed third stage was happening, the grammaticalisation of the sibling category could thus have been achieved due to the lack of necessity in marking the gender of sibling participants. This situation is in stark contrast to the one proposed for non-siblings, where the ability to distinguish dual participants was extremely beneficial. These cultural preoccupations are likely to have been the ones that contributed to the evolution of such a useful three-way distinction, made possible by the very efficient use of only two morphemes.

6.4 Stage 4

With *-nintha* and *-ngintha* now fully reanalysed as masculine and feminine dual number markers, there would be nothing to stop the speakers from further exploiting the two morphemes' occurrence in the slots Num₁ and Num₂ and extending this gender-enhanced dual number marking ability to subjects. In effect this would not have been a huge leap for the language to make, given that the direct object series would have already marked experiencers in both impersonal verbs and in predicating nominal constructions, and in these constructions also stative subjects. Stage four thus represents the morphemes' extension to specifying all kinds of subjects.

²⁰ The Murriny Patha also practise the sororate and levirate marriage patterns (Street, 1987, 33). That is where a widower (in the case of the sororate) or a widow (in the case of the levirate) preferably marries the sibling of their deceased spouse.

²¹ My corpus of Murriny Patha data does not include a single reference to a set of opposite-sex siblings, although the corpus (consisting of natural conversation, monologic texts and song texts) contains well over fifty constructions expressing 'sibling' arguments.

6.5 Stage 5

Presumably the three way distinction between male non-sibling versus female non-sibling versus sibling referents would have proved so beneficial that as a fifth stage these dual non-sibling number marking morphemes were regularised right across the free pronoun paradigm, essentially by copying the relevant forms from the direct object series (Table 7). A similar process is likely to have happened with the paucals (although this may have happened previously).

			Direct Objects		Free Pronouns
			Num ₁	Num ₂	
Singular		1	-ngi		ngay
		2	-nyi		nyinyi
		3f	-Ø		nigunu
		3m	-Ø		nukunu
1 Inclusive		du	-nyi		neki
		paucf	-nyi	-ngime	nekingime
		paucm	-nyi	-neme	nekinime
		pl	-nyi		neki
D A U C A L	dual non-siblings	1f	-ngan'gu	-ngintha	ngan'gungintha
		1m	-ngan'gu	-nintha	ngan'gunintha
		2f	-nan'gu	-ngintha	nan'gungintha
		2m	-nan'gu	-nintha	nan'gunintha
		3f	-n'gu	-ngintha	perningintha
	3m	-wun'gu	-ngintha		
		-n'gu	-nintha		pernintha
		-wun'gu	-nintha		perenintha
	dual siblings	1	-ngan'gu		ngan'gu
		2	-nan'gu		nan'gu
3		-n'gu		piguna	
paucal non-siblings		-wun'gu		puwuna	
	1f	-ngan'gu	-ngime	ngan'gungime	
	1m	-ngan'gu	-neme	ngan'guneme	
	2f	-nan'gu	-ngime	nan'gungime	
	2m	-nan'gu	-neme	nan'guneme	
	3f	-n'gu	-ngime	peningime	
	-wun'gu	-ngime			
	3m	-n'gu	-neme	peneme	
	-wun'gu	-neme			
Plural + paucal siblings		1	-ngan		ngan'gi
		2	-nan		nan'gi
		3	-n		pigunu
			-wun		pigurnu

Table 7. The direct object pronominals as compared to the free pronouns

6.6 Stage 6

In the final stage, the ethical dative series would have been rendered unproductive, essentially because the two highest frequency members were interpreted first and foremost as number markers. Thus we arrive at modern Murriny Patha where the ethical datives do surface occasionally in certain verbs in texts. Since the series has become unproductive, we might expect the role of marking malefaction to be subsumed by other series or other constructions. 32 provides some evidence for this.

32.

Ngayka nganinarruwitngintha da nginipuny nyini ngarirturtmani namnga.

ngay -ka	ngani	-narru	-wit	-ngintha	da	nginipuny	nyini
1s -Top	1sS.4_be.Fut	-2dusibIO	-go_to_sleep	-du.f.sib	place/time	like/similar	that
Pro -Part	FinV	-IO	-Cov	-Num	NomCl	adj	dem

nga	-rirturt	-mani	nam	-nga
1sS.19.Fut	-ignite	-should	2sS.8_say.nFut	-1sIO
FinV	-Cov	-modal	FinV	-IO

‘I’m falling asleep on you two. I should try lighting a fire like that one you were telling me about.’ (2004-08-08JB03b1.txt, 232666_236614)

In 32 ‘on you two’ is being expressed by the indirect object *-narru*. The argument (you two) is affected, albeit mildly, by the action of falling asleep. Thus, this could be considered a mildly malefactive predicate. Arguably, this referent expressed by the indirect object might have once been expressed by the ethical dative series²².

7. An alternative account for the trials/paucals

Here I propose an alternative account for the extension of gender marking to the paucal category. This account does not claim the trials/paucals as a proto-Southern Daly innovation. It does presuppose a single trial/paucal number marker, most likely **-nime*, the same as the NgTy form. With the *-nintha* and *-ngintha* already fully reanalysed as dual number markers, speakers would have been conscious of a robust masculine/feminine distinction brought about by the contrast between the two phonemes /n/ and /ng/. At the very least, this contrast would have been evident in third singular indirect objects, the third singular ethical datives and in the two new dual non-sibling number markers. Significantly, this small set of morphemes were all fillers of the two slots Num₁ and Num₂.

	3sIO	3sED	dual non-sib	*trial/pauc
masculine	-na	-nintha	-nintha	-nime
feminine	-nge	-ngintha	-ngintha	

Table 8. preMP trial/paucal **-nime* as compared with certain other fillers of slots Num₁ and Num₂.

²² Green (pers. comm.) suggested an alternative scenario – that the indirect objects, in taking on the marking of malefaction, may have stolen ground from the ethical datives, leaving them ripe for reanalysis. Attractive as this stronger claim is, I don’t yet have enough examples (like 32) to support it.

At this stage of the grammaticalisation process, MP speakers would have had three dedicated number marking fillers of slot Num₂, two of them bearing a gender contrast and the third not. Significantly, the other masculine fillers of this slot began with the same phoneme /n/ as the number marker not bearing the contrast. Under these circumstances, paradigmatic pressure would help speakers to interpret the /n/ in **-nime* as masculine. This would then leave a gaping hole in the paradigm for the feminine trial/paucal, a hole that could be easily filled by replacing the /n/ with its feminine counterpart /ng/. Thus by analogy with the dual number markers, the language arrives at two pre-Murriny Patha forms **-nime* (trial/paucal masculine) and **-ngime* (trial/paucal feminine).

Both of the outlined proposals are feasible but due to the lack of hard evidence, neither scenario is verifiable until further research unearths the ultimate source of the trial/paucal morphemes.

8. A bridging context

Thus far I've concentrated on building a case for the grammatical reanalysis of the two morphemes, based primarily on their distribution in the verb complex. However the argument would be greatly strengthened by finding a bridging context; that is, some particular forms or constructions, whereby under certain conditions, either the former or the latter interpretations might be equally plausible. Example 33 comes from a creation myth:

33.

Wirndiwandutj nganaka kardu wirndiwandutj,

wirndiwandutj	nganaka	kardu	wirndiwandutj
man's_name	you_know?	human	man's_name
PrName	Int	NomCl	PrName

'Wirndiwandutj, you know, a man called Wirndiwandutj,

dirrimnunginthanunggewardanu nukunu wardathu dirrangan'ge.

dirrim	-nu	-ngintha	-nu	-ngge	-warda	-nu
3sS.36.nFut	-Inch	-3sfEd	-Inch	-become_jealous	-then	-Inch?
FinV	-dTrns	-ED	-dTrns	-Cov	-adv	-dTrns?

nukunu	warda	-gathu	dirrangan	-Ø	-ngge
3sm	then	-towards	3sS.28.nFut-3sDO	-jealous_someone	
Pro	adv	-Part	FinV	-DO	-Cov

he started to get jealous on her.' (2004-10-16JB02.txt, 0193.081, 0197.54)

The extract contains two verbs, both with the same coverb *-ngge*. *Dirrangan'ge*²³ is a high transitive verb of class 28, literally meaning, 'he "jealoused" someone'²⁴.

²³ As a result of a morphophonemic process (Street 1987: 105-110), the velar nasal of the coverb *-ngge* is deleted following the preceding nasal.

²⁴ 'Jealousing' a person is a more agentive process than 'envying' them or 'being jealous of' them. "Jealousing (from the Kriol *jelajim*) is to give someone a hard time though jealousy. This may include threats, intimidation, verbal abuse or even violence. Jealousing therefore is more than merely being jealous of someone or something. The implication is that the jealouser is going to do something about it so you had better watch out!" (Blythe, 2001: 40).

Dirrimnunginthanungewardanu is a low transitive, class 36, inchoative version of what is basically the same scenario, verb class 36 being the low transitive version of class 28. *Dirrimnunginthanungewardanu* is an extremely unusual word form because there would appear to be three inchoative detransitivisers, *-nu*.²⁵ The other reason it is unusual, and for this it was an extraordinarily fortuitous attestation, is that it is the only example in my corpus of a third singular ethical dative occurring in the Num₁ slot, the same slot where we would expect the dual non-singular number markers to go. Note that my consultant translated this expression in the singular as, ‘he became jealous’, which is an inchoative construction. The subject of the verb is co-referential with the named participant, *Wirndiwandutj*. The third singular feminine ethical dative *-ngintha* introduces his wife, the main protagonist in the story, as the person adversely affected by (that is bearing the brunt of) his becoming jealous. This particular use of the verb is not an example of the other valency-reducing strategy that may be applied to the transitive verb ‘jealous someone’, namely the reciprocal construction. However the reciprocal attestation has basically the same form (cf. 34).

34.

Dirrimnunginthanungge.

dirrim	-nu	-ngintha	-nu	-ngge
3sS.36.nFut	-Recip	-du.f.nsib	-Recip	-jealous_e/o
FinV	-dTrns	-Num	-dTrans	-Cov

‘Those two (at least one of whom is female) “jealous” each other.’
(JB2006FN1, 3)

This time, in 34, *-ngintha* is the dual non-sibling number marker. It serves to increment the indicated singular subject to two, giving the reciprocal verb a dual feminine subject. Here what is basically the same form, *-ngintha*, in 33 is interpreted as an ethical dative giving a malefactive reading, and in 34, as a number marker. This bridging context arises because ‘jealous someone’, lends itself to both reciprocal²⁶ and malefactive readings. This is strong evidence that the dual number markers were sourced from the ethical dative paradigm.

²⁵ Two detransitivisers in the one verb complex are not common, although for the low transitive verb classes 36, 37 and 38 two is the norm for dual participants. I have only one other attestation in a low transitive verb of an extra *-nu* so far to the right of the coverb, which is not enough data to revise the verbal template presented in §3.1, although it is enough to convince me that neither form can be dismissed as a mere speech error.

²⁶ This claim I’m making is that that ‘jealousing’, as practised in Aboriginal communities, tends to describe a naturally reciprocal state of affairs. Husbands and wives tend to be mutually jealous of each other for seeing other (real or imagined) partners. Such jealousy is actively fostered. For example, a wife who suspects her husband’s attentions may be straying, will actively seek out the attentions of another man so as to regain the attentions of the husband. With regards to Aboriginal clients of a Townsville medical clinic, Kahn et al. (1980: 730) state: “Further, there is a pervasive jealousy and mistrust that seems to be present in most relationships. Whilst it is accentuated by alcohol, the jealousy is much more than the result of drunken states. The women too regard the men as always ready to “play up” with other women, especially when drinking. [...] The men consider the women potentially always ready to be unfaithful, especially during the long periods when they are away drinking or working. Even amongst the young teenagers, jealousy interactions are frequent. Girls seem to seek attention and gain pleasure from goading boys to fight over them.”

9. Conclusion

It is perhaps not surprising that we should find the final reflexes of the ethical dative series persisting in constructions relating to jealousy. The notion of jealousy is heavily marked for malefaction. Invariably, a second party is affected detrimentally by the actions of the party who is jealous. ‘Being jealous of someone’ is also an inherently agentive function²⁷. It is not surprising then that even in the cases of reduced transitivity, such as in 33, that the detrimentally affected argument is expressed, since there is invariably a detrimentally affected party.

It is equally unsurprising that the *Ninggeninggepatha* constructions should also preserve the ethical datives. After all, these constructions effectively constitute a different kind of low-transitivity mapping of the ‘be jealous of’ function. In these cases, it is the experiencer subject that is expressed by the ethical datives as the party detrimentally affected by jealousy. Perhaps then a better translation of example 10 might be, ‘He is consumed by jealousy’. Given that these constructions are also nominal, rather than verbal, one might expect the forms to occur with higher frequency than the ethical datives might otherwise occur in verbal constructions. Perhaps the two forms *kardu ninggeninggepathanintha*, ‘jealous man’, and *kardu ninggeninggepathangintha*, ‘jealous woman’, are essentially frozen forms, or are on the way to becoming frozen forms.

In §6, I suggested that Murriny Patha speakers were motivated to make a gender distinction between groups of dual participants. What might the motivations be driving the extension of gender marking? Speculatively, there may have been benefits in distinguishing the context of social activities, such as hunting or those ritual activities that involved groups of men, from those contexts that included women such as in family life. However, as Simpson (2002) points out, the processes of grammaticalisation can take many centuries and the cultural practices that motivated the initial change may no longer be current amongst the speakers of the modern language. The initial triggering cultural practice may no longer be recoverable. However, I’ve taken the assumption that the cultural preoccupations concerning the behaviour amongst pairs of siblings may be similar to those we find in Wadeye today. Under this assumption, I’ve made suggestions as to why it was unnecessary to morphologically mark the gender of siblings.

The spread of the number markers is likely to have been driven by referential enrichment. Given that in natural conversation the language makes scant use of case to indicate core syntactic arguments, and that the polysynthetic verbs do not mark differences in nominal class membership²⁸, the language is heavily reliant on its interlocutor’s ability to distinguish between groups of human participants. Under the pathway proposed in §6, if one counts all the possible distinctions, Murriny Patha would have moved from a system able to distinguish 20 possible groups of human participants, as subjects and direct objects, to a system able to distinguish up to 26 groups of participants. Amongst the indirect objects, it would have moved from a system able to distinguish 21 groups, to one able to distinguish 27 possible groups. These gains were achieved by using only two morphemes. If one factors in the gaining of a gender

²⁷ Note that of the valency reducing strategies, a reflexive mapping of this function would be nonsensical since the function implies more than one participant.

²⁸ Murriny Patha is nominally classifying with ten nominal classifiers which include only the one human category, *kardu*.

distinction in the paucals as well, the gains were even greater. In terms of referential enrichment, the benefits are clear.

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Appendices

		Direct Objects		Indirect Objects		
		Num ₁	Num ₂	Num ₁	Num ₂	
Singular	1	-ngi		-nga		
	2	-nyi		-mba		
	3f	-Ø		-nge		
	3m	-Ø		-na		
1 Inclusive	du	-nyi		-nye		
	paucf	-nyi	-ngime	-nye	-ngime	
	paucm	-nyi	-neme	-nye	-neme	
	pl	-nyi		-nye		
D A U C A L	dual non-siblings	1f	-ngan'gu	-ngintha	-ngarru	-ngintha
		1m	-ngan'gu	-nintha	-ngarru	-nintha
		2f	-nan'gu	-ngintha	-narru	-ngintha
		2m	-nan'gu	-nintha	-narru	-nintha
		3f	-n'gu	-ngintha	-rru	-ngintha
			-wun'gu	-ngintha	-wirru	-ngintha
	3m		-n'gu	-nintha	-rru	-nintha
			-wun'gu	-nintha	-wirru	-nintha
	dual siblings	1	-ngan'gu		-ngarru	
2		-nan'gu		-narru		
3		-n'gu		-rru		
paucal non-siblings		-wun'gu		-wirru		
	1f	-ngan'gu	-ngime	-ngarru	-ngime	
	1m	-ngan'gu	-neme	-ngarru	-neme	
	2f	-nan'gu	-ngime	-narru	-ngime	
	2m	-nan'gu	-neme	-narru	-neme	
	3f	-n'gu	-ngime	-rru	-ngime	
		-wun'gu	-ngime	-wirru	-ngime	
	3m	-n'gu	-neme	-rru	-neme	
	-wun'gu	-neme	-wirru	-neme		
Plural + paucal siblings	1	-ngan		-ngarra		
	2	-nan		-narra		
	3	-n		-rra		
		-wun		-wirra		

Table 9. Direct and Indirect Objects + Number markers

	FinV (Subj)	Num1	Cov	Num2	Reading	Eg.
1	Singular	Ø	Cov	Ø	sing subj, (low trans) or sing subj, 3sDO (trans)	33
2	Singular	sing/pl obj	Cov	Ø	sing subj, sing/pl obj	3, 5, 33
3	Singular	sing/pl obj	Cov	du.nsib	du.nsib subj, sing/pl obj	24
4	Singular	du.nsib	Cov	Ø	du.nsib subj, (low trans) or du.nsib subj, 3sDO (trans)	23, 34
5	Singular	dauc obj	Cov	du.nsib	sing subj, du.nsib obj or du.nsib subj, du.nsib obj	4, 20, 32
6	Singular	dauc obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	sing subj, pauc.nsib obj or du.nsib subj, pauc.nsib obj	21
7	Singular	dauc obj	Cov	Ø	sing subj, du.sib obj	
8	dauc	Ø	Cov	Ø	du.sib subj, (low trans) or du.sib subj, 3sDO (trans)	26
9	dauc	Ø	Cov	pauc.nsib	pauc.nsib subj (low trans) or pauc.nsib subj, 3sDO (trans)	25
10	dauc	sing/pl obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, sing/pl obj	2
11	dauc	dauc obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, pauc.nsib obj or du.sib subj, pauc.nsib obj	
12	dauc	dauc obj	Cov	du.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, du.nsib obj or du.sib subj, du.nsib obj	
13	dauc	dauc obj	Cov	Ø	du.sib subj, du.sib obj	
14	pl/pauc.sib	Ø	Cov	Ø	pl/pauc.sib subj (low trans) or pl/pauc.sib subj, 3sDO (trans)	
15	pl/pauc.sib	sing/pl obj	Cov	Ø	pl/pauc.sib subj, sing/pl obj	
16	pl/pauc.sib	dauc obj	Cov	du.nsib	pl/pauc.sib subj, du.nsib obj	
17	pl/pauc.sib	dauc obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	pl/pauc.sib subj, pauc.nsib obj	
18	pl/pauc.sib	dauc obj	Cov	Ø	pl/pauc.sib subj, du.sib obj	
19	non-sing	dauc subj	Cov	Ø	du.sib subj (low trans)	
20	non-sing	dauc subj	Cov	Ø	pauc.sib subj (low trans)	
21	non-sing	sing/pl obj	Cov	Ø	du.sib subj, sing/pl obj	
22	non-sing	sing/pl obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, sing/pl obj	
23	non-sing	dauc obj	Cov	du.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, du.nsib obj or du.sib subj, du.nsib obj	
24	non-sing	dauc obj	Cov	pauc.nsib	pauc.nsib subj, pauc.nsib obj or du.sib subj, pauc.nsib obj	
25	non-sing	dauc obj	Cov	Ø	du.sib subj, du.sib obj or pauc.nsib subj, du.sib obj	22

Table 10. Number marking in Murriny Patha verbs.

