

Aboriginal linguistic exchange in Darwin

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Outline

1. Darwin and the Aboriginal homelands
2. Murrinhpatha in the Daly region
3. Visiting Darwin
4. Settling in Darwin
5. Recontextualising multilingual exchange

Northern Australia

- Tradition of **receptive multilingualism**
(Sutton 1978; Wilkins & Nash 2008; Singer & Harris 2016; Evans 2018)
- Language is a valued, proprietary medium of exchange
- ‘linguistic goods may enter the marketplace as objects of exchange’ (Irvine 1989)

- Darwin settlement c. 1900
- ‘Colonial outpost’ now pop. 150,000

- Larrakia people fenced off
- Other Aboriginal people expelled

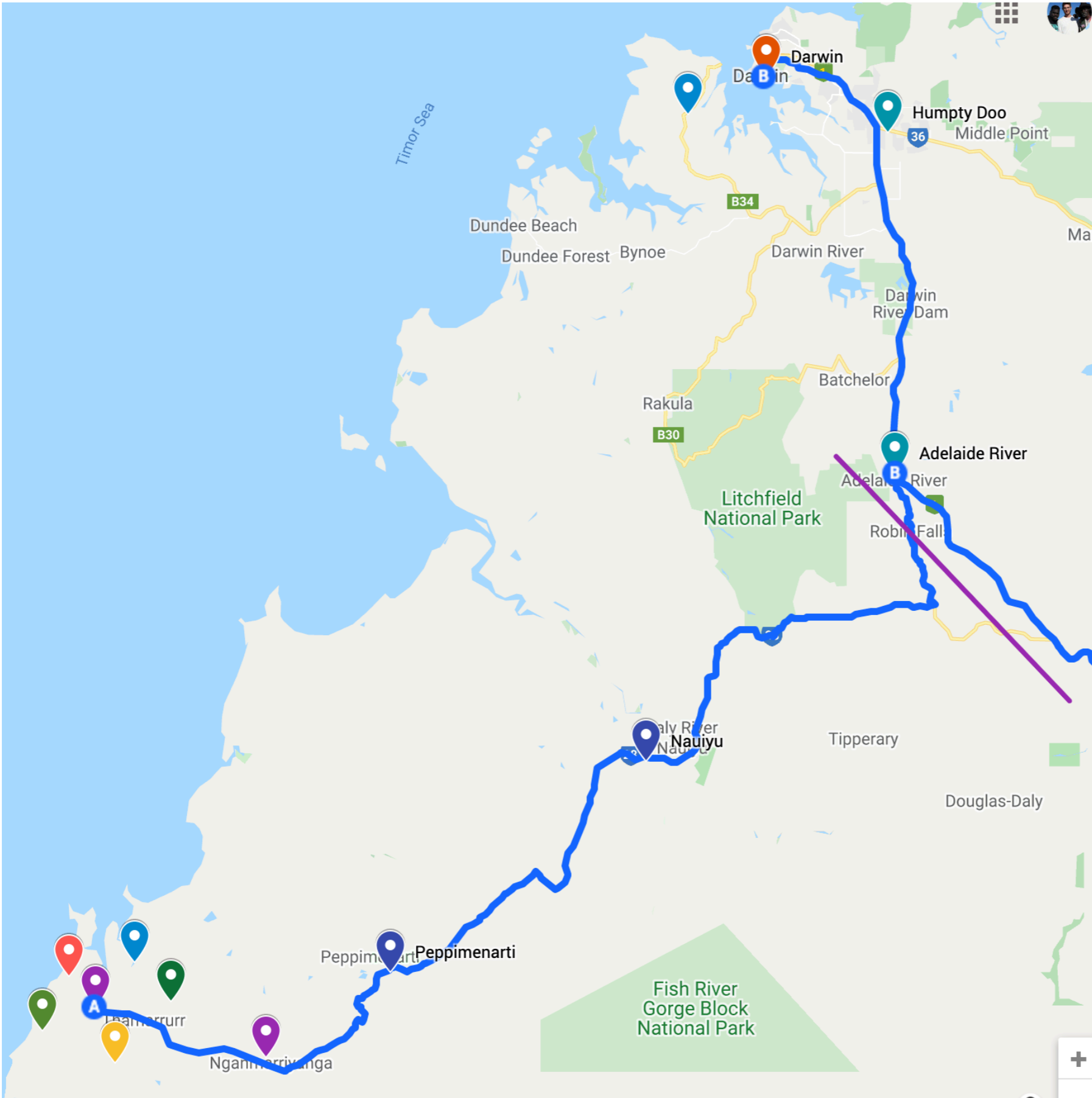




- Homelands: Trad languages still dominant
Convergence of regional linguistic ecologies
(Mansfield in press)
- Some maintain multilingualism (Maningrida, Warruwi)
(Elwell 1982; Singer and Harris 2016; Vaughn 2018)

Murrinhpatha world

- 3000 speakers
 - Wadeye: 2300
 - Nganmarriyanga: 400
 - Peppimenarti, Nauiyu, etc: 300
- Regional convergence
(Marri Ngarr, Marri Tjevin, Murrinh Kura, Ngan'gityemerri)



Murrinhpatha

This study

- Aboriginal languages in Darwin (Murrinhpatha bias)
- Related research:
 - Ab English in Perth (Rodriguez Louro & Collard 2021)
 - Various ethnographic asides (Sansom 1980; Day 2001; Burke 2018)

- Fieldwork: 4 months, 2018-2020
- Starting from Murrinhpatha contacts
- Interviews (English, MP); Participant observation
- Limitations on recording

Holiday in Darwin

- Relief from stresses of homeland settlement (Peterson 1993; Austin-Broos 2009)
- Novel urban experiences
- Predominantly middle-aged visitors

- Stay with kin
- ‘Long-grassing’ (Murrinhpatha: *langkrath*)
- Non-normative urban experience:
camping, foraging

- Casuarina shopping centre



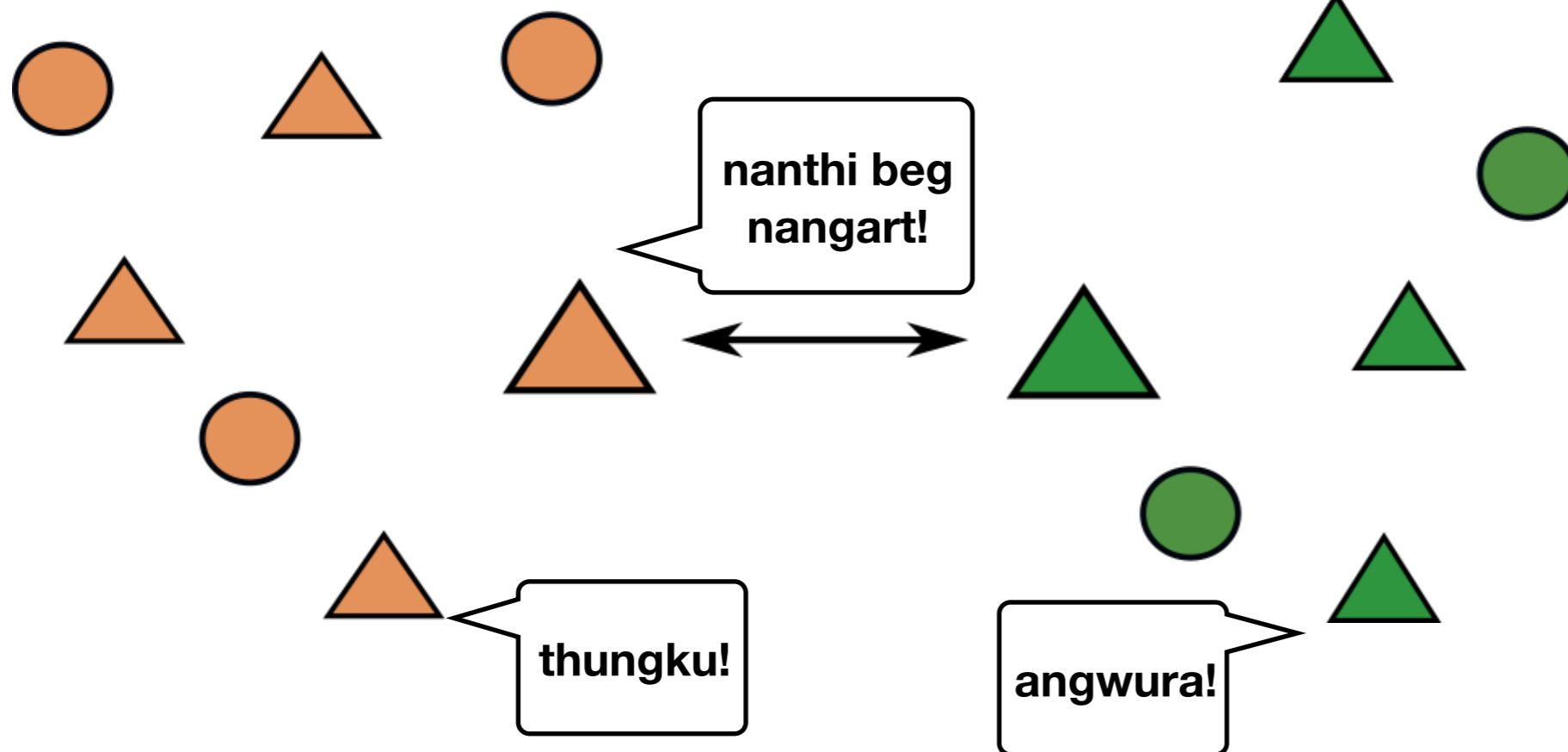
- Park drinking
- Pejorative views (mainstream misconceptions)
 - *ngepan derranganputh* ‘wasting one’s spirit’
- Positive side: camaraderie, sociality

My first encounter with linguistic exchange in Darwin

- Drinking party near Casuarina beach; middle-aged men and women
 - 3 Murrinhpatha speakers
 - 2 Djambarrpuyngu (Yolngu) speakers
 - 2-3 Burarra speakers
 - 1 Warlpiri + Pitjantjatjara speaker
- Marriage connections
- Using traditional languages + Kriol/English fallback

Anindilyakwa

Murrinhpatha



- *thungku* ‘fire / lighter’
- *angwura* ‘fire / lighter’
- *nanthi beg na-nga-art*
thing bag hand.2SG.IRR-1SG.DAT-get
‘grab my bag for me!’

- Why not just use English/Kriol the whole time?
- Traditional languages realise a social connection
- Language use accumulates social capital

Diplomatic vocabulary

	Anindilyakwa	Burarra	Kunwinjku	Murrinhpatha	Yolngu
<i>tobacco</i>	dambakwa	djambaka	baki	mi-gathu	ngarili
<i>lighter</i>	angwura	bol		thungku	gurrtha
<i>none, nothing</i>	nara	ginyagara	larrk	mami	(yaka) bayngu
<i>water, drink (n.)</i>	anija	bugula		kura	nganitji
<i>good, okay</i>					manymak
<i>come here!</i>	guwa!	guwa!			
<i>sit down!</i>	angbarriya!				
<i>wait here!</i>				mup thi!	

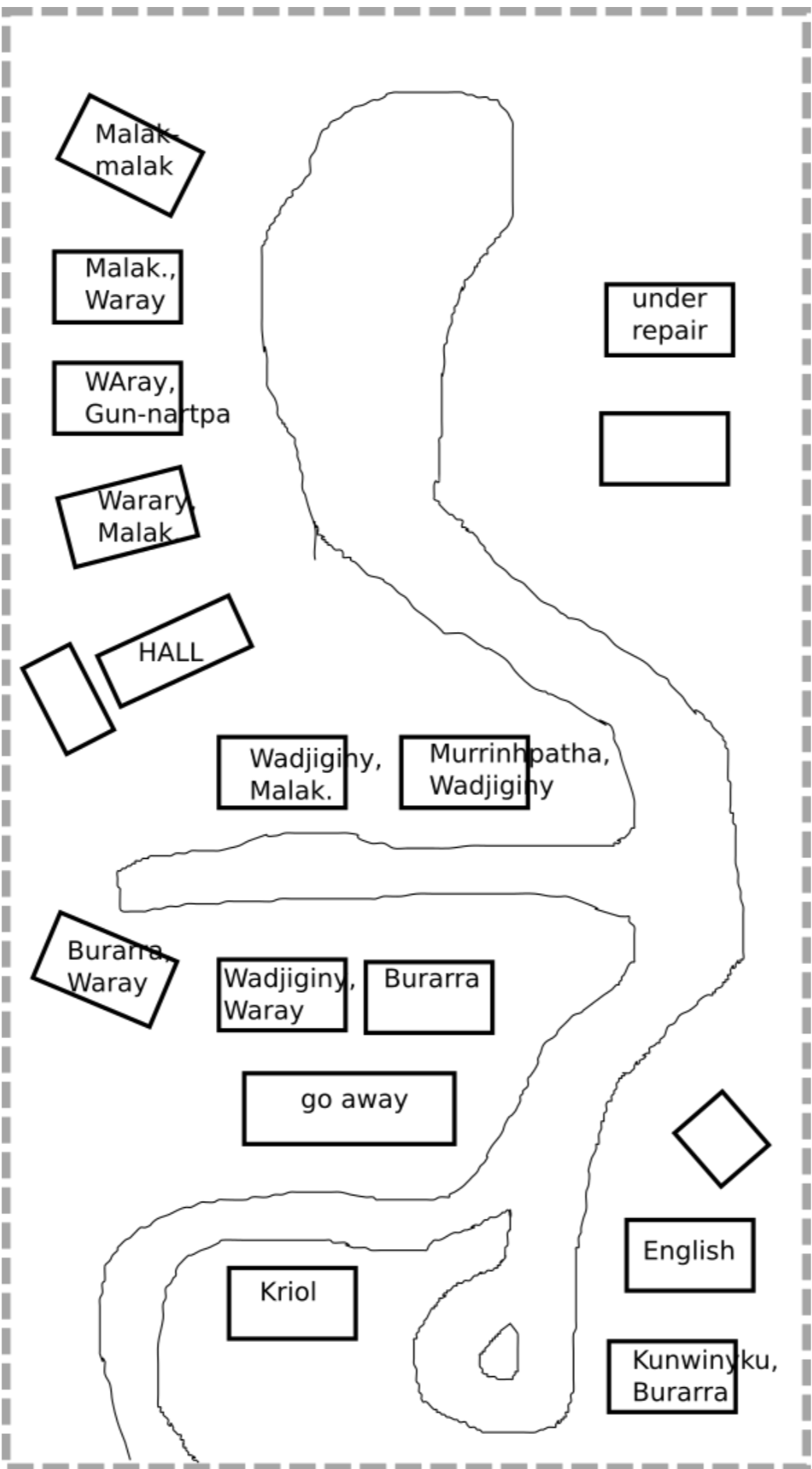
With Kriol...

- Wadjiginy man, visited relatives in Wadeye
- Full reciprocal multilingualism at Casuarina shopping centre
- Understand verbs
dendharl pirrim 'it's closed'
- Some 'crossing':
pule 'brother'
puy-ya! 'keep going / see you later'

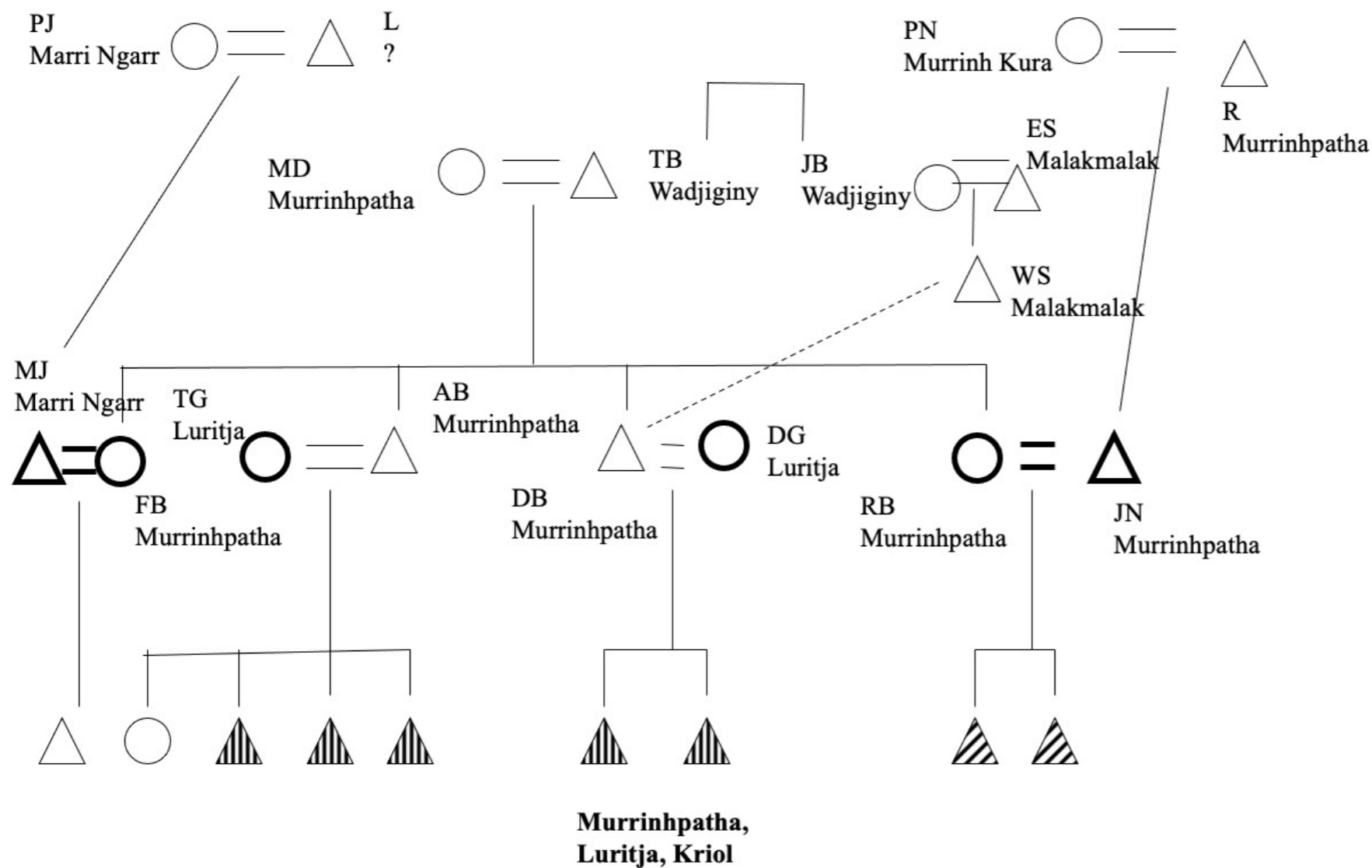
Settling in Darwin

- Town camps, some suburbs
- E.g. Wadjiginy / Murrinhpatha in Darwin 20 years, raised 6 children
- Receptive multilingualism, Kriol fallback

Settling in Darwin



- Next generation...
Wadjiginy/Murrinhpatha \Leftrightarrow Luritja



Receptive multilingual marriages

Tiwi ○ = △ Murrinhpatha

Murrinhpatha ○ = △ Tiwi

Anindilyakwa ○ = △ Murrinhpatha

Murrinhpatha ○ = △ Wubuy

Murrinhpatha ○ = △ Kunwinjku

Wadjiginy ○ = △ Tiwi

Burarra ○ = △ Kunwinjku

Kuninjku ○ = △ Yolngu

tje
mammath

Adult learning of polysynthetic
languages

- Children of marriage inherit (receptive) multilingualism
- E.g. Tiwi \Leftrightarrow Murrinhpatha middle-aged men working in Darwin

How to adults learn language?

- Not difficult
- Listening
- Magical process initiated by affinal kin

JM: How did you learn?

May: Quick way –

Doris: Listening, or they can sing them. Sing the tongue.

[Two girls who had missed out on learning their father's language...]

They sent them back to their father's [homeland], which is Lajamanu, and they didn't know anything about speaking the language. And as they were getting it, they can speak it [Warlpiri]. ... They sing people. They only turned 18 and they both went back, and a couple of years they come back, they started speaking that language.

Recontextualising linguistic exchange

- Multilingual exchange is a traditional practice
- Egalitarian valuation of languages (Brandl & Walsh 1982)
- Not commercial capital (Bourdieu 1977; Coulmas 1992),
but social capital (Sansom 1988; Irvine 1989; Merlan 1991)

- Greater geographic scale than before
- More weak social ties
→ more partial learning?
- English/Kriol as a fallback

- Only languages that remain vibrant in homelands
- Settlement identity grants right to exchange
- Languages are fungible beyond heredity

Summary

- Aboriginal homelands people as cultural and linguistic outsiders in Darwin
- Ramifying social networks with linguistic exchange
- Darwin holiday multilingual encounters
- Receptive multilingual marriages
- Exchange spreads through network