

Reviving the Concept of Time: Glossing First Nations' Languages

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Wangka kanyira ngalipirniku

PRESERVING OUR LANGUAGES FOR ALL OF US



Time

Most Aboriginal languages include past, present, and future temporal references.

The distant past is linked to the *Tjukurrpa*, sacred stories and songs, and happened ‘a long time ago’. *The recent past* is used for completed actions posterior to the *present*.

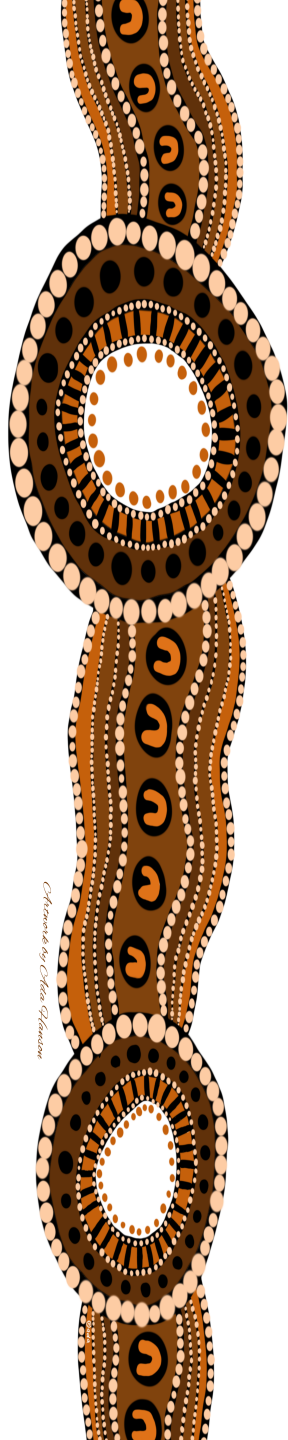
The present is now, then, and everywhen (Stanner, 1967) and it could be the moment of speaking or an unspecified period of time.

The future is anterior to the present and does not indicate a strict point of time.

The different time concepts between Australian languages and English

Solar dating system





keeping time
losing time
saving time
wasting time
spending time
killing time
making time
being on-time
loosing track of time
being time efficient
being time poor
time is money

Created by Chika Okonkwo



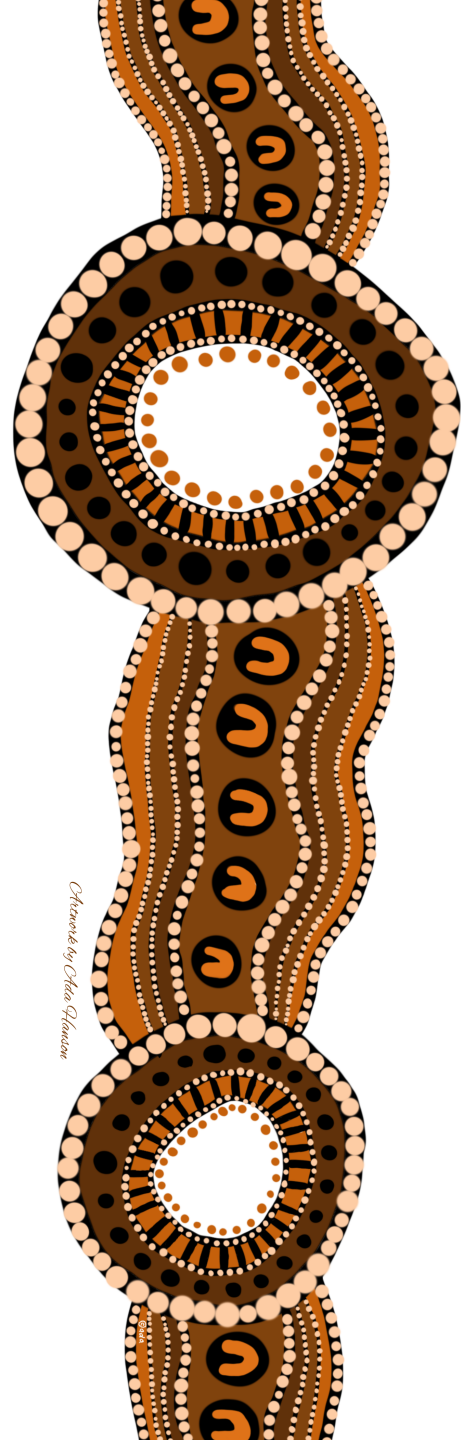


monitoring time
keeping time
track of time

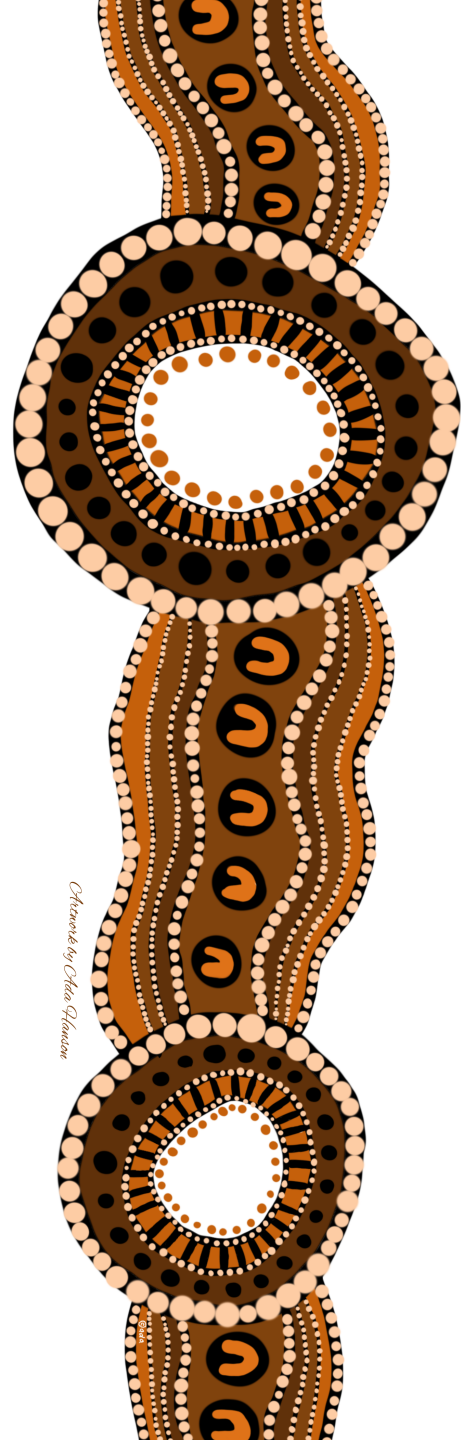




Ngaanyatjarra women, in the Western Desert area, would nyinakarri, *sit still and be*, by the ashes and watch the damper being baked without the need to check it regularly.



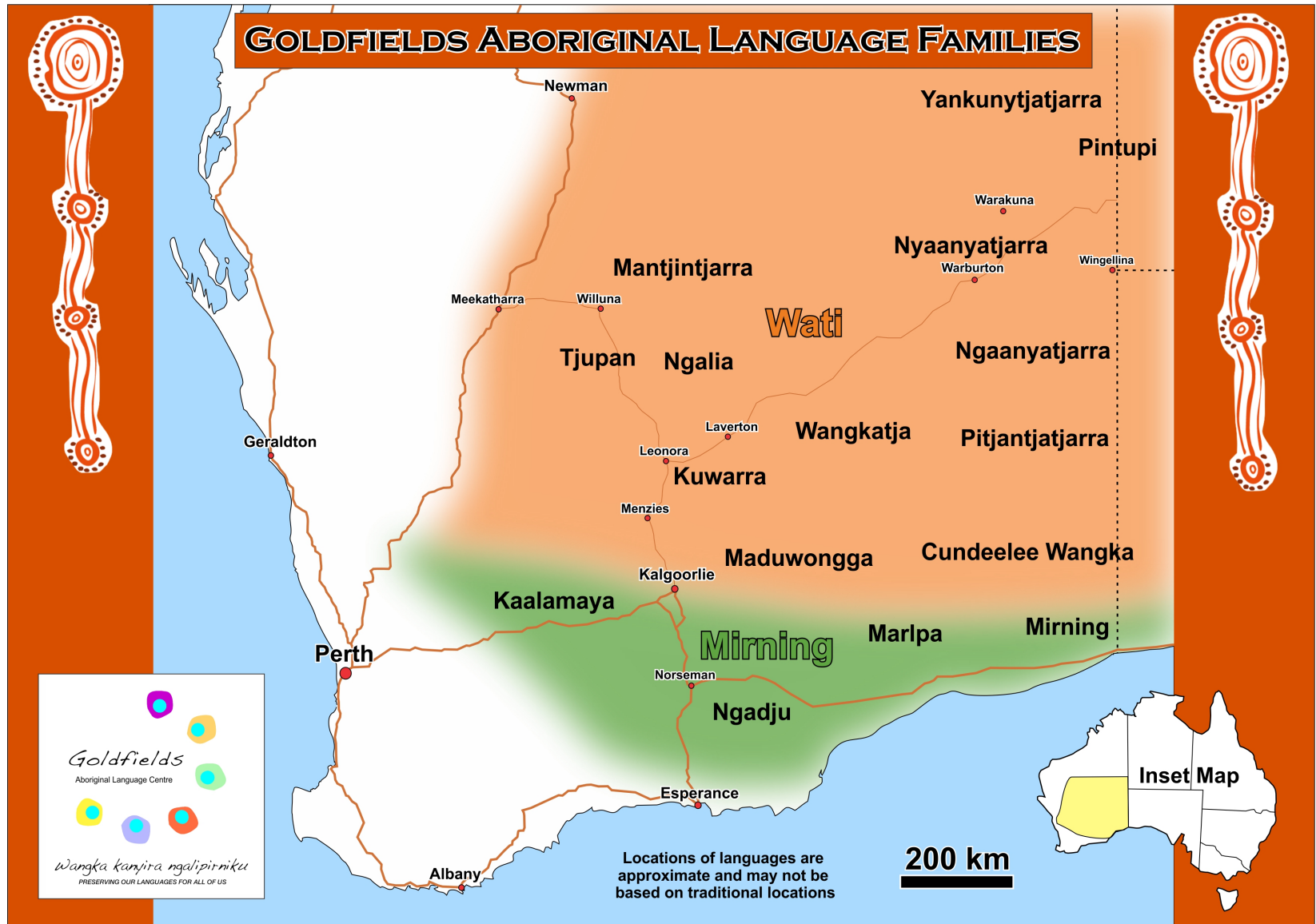
In some polychronic cultures such as Turkish culture, the Arabic term '*inşallah*' shows how the concept of time is experienced.



...but one of the elders said 'Listen, in this community it is not important 'when' things happen, it is important 'that' they happen.

Janca, Aleksandar, as quoted by Adams, Kelly, 2009

The different time concepts leads to mis-glossing





yesterday

Tjupan **karrajungka** *yesterday afternoon*
afternoon
when the sun is still up

Mirniny **kankara** *the day before today*

Matjalu ngurntunya nangu kankara.
matja+lu ngurntu+nya na+ngu kankara
3SG+ERG 2SG+ACC see+PAST yesterday
He saw you yesterday.

Cundeelee Wangka **munga** *dark*
mungarrtji *late afternoon*
yesterday



today

Tjupan **kuwarri** *now, present time*

Kuwarrija yapun nyaku lirruja lirrpanapayi jurti-jurtiyingu Jiwalyta.

kuwarri+ja yapu+n nya+ku lirru+ja lirrpana+payi
jurtijurti+ngu Tjiwaly+ta

today+? rock+? see+REF snake+? wriggle+CHAR
twist+PAST Tjiwaly+at

Today, you can see the rocks where the snake was
wriggling and twisting at Tjiwarly.

Cundeelee Wangka **kuwarri** *recently, today, now*



tomorrow

Mirniny **minyaka** *tomorrow morning*
in the morning

Matjarri minyaka tjantju yurlu nganarri.

matja+rri minya+ka tjantju yurlu ngana+rri

3SG+ALL tomorrow+FUT tjantju this way go+IMP

He will come this way tomorrow morning.



tomorrow

Tjupan **yungun** *in the morning*

Pakalakuya walarlku yungkunti.

paka+la+kuya walarl+ku yungun+ti

get.up+IMP+? song+REF tomorrow+?

They will get up and sing in the morning.

tomorrow

Cundeelee Wangka **tjirntu** *sun, day*

tjirntungka *in the morning*

tomorrow

daytime

**Ngarrirra tjirnturringumpa pakarnumpa
yunguntjarra.**

ngarri+rra tjirntu+rru+ngu+mpa paka+rnu+mpa
yunguntjarra

sleep+SEQ sun+INCH+PAST+POSS arise+PAST+POSS
morning

After sleeping until it became day, he arose and it was morning.



morning

Wangkatja **munga** *night, dark, darkness*
-ngka is a locative suffix

munga-mungangka *first thing in the morning*

Cundeelee Wangka **yunguntjarra** *tomorrow*
next day
morning

mungawinki *early morning*

noon

Wangkatja **mungarntji** *afternoon, yesterday*

Cundeelee Wangka **winyurpa** *midday, noon*
mungarrtji *late afternoon*

Tjupan **karta** *afternoon*

kartanka *after sunset*

kartaju *late afternoon*

kartangka *after dark*



noon

Tjupan

**Mangkupayiyinku jumpa-jumpalku kartajungka
ngurrati.**

manku+payi+yi+nku jumpajumpa+lku kartaju+ngka
ngurra+ti

hat+CHAR+3SG+INST hunt+HAB afternoon+LOC
home+ALL

In the afternoon, they had to go home before the curfew.



tonight

Mirniny **kankiya** *night, night time*
kankiya purtiyan *dark, night time*

Kangkiya warlpi nganarrin.

kangkiya warlpi ngana+rrin

night water go+FUT?

Rain comes tonight.

It might rain any time after it becomes dark.



tonight

Wangkatja **mungatji** *dark, evening, tonight*
munga *dark, darkness, dark time*

Cundeelee Wangka **munga** *night, darkness*
yukatji *evening, dusk, after sundown*

Tjupan **jukalyta** *sunless time, evening*



tonight

In Tjupan the length of the shadows is used as temporal references.

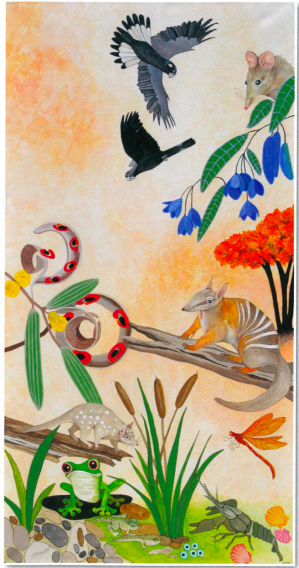
Jirntu pakarnu wilja jupanarringu.

jirntu paka+rnu wilja jupan+arri+ngu

sun up+PAST shade straight+become+PAST

The sun is overhead and the shadow is straight down.

Australian languages time references contain critical cultural concepts: Noongar Seasons



Birak

Birak season of the young



Boonaroo

Boonaroo season of the adolescence



Djiran

Djiran season of adulthood



Mookaroo

Mookaroo fertility season



Djilba

Djilba season of conception



Kambarang

Kambarang season of birth

Artwork by Vanessa Martin, Noongar Boodjar Language Centre

Ngadju Seasons

Ngarnngi
the hot time

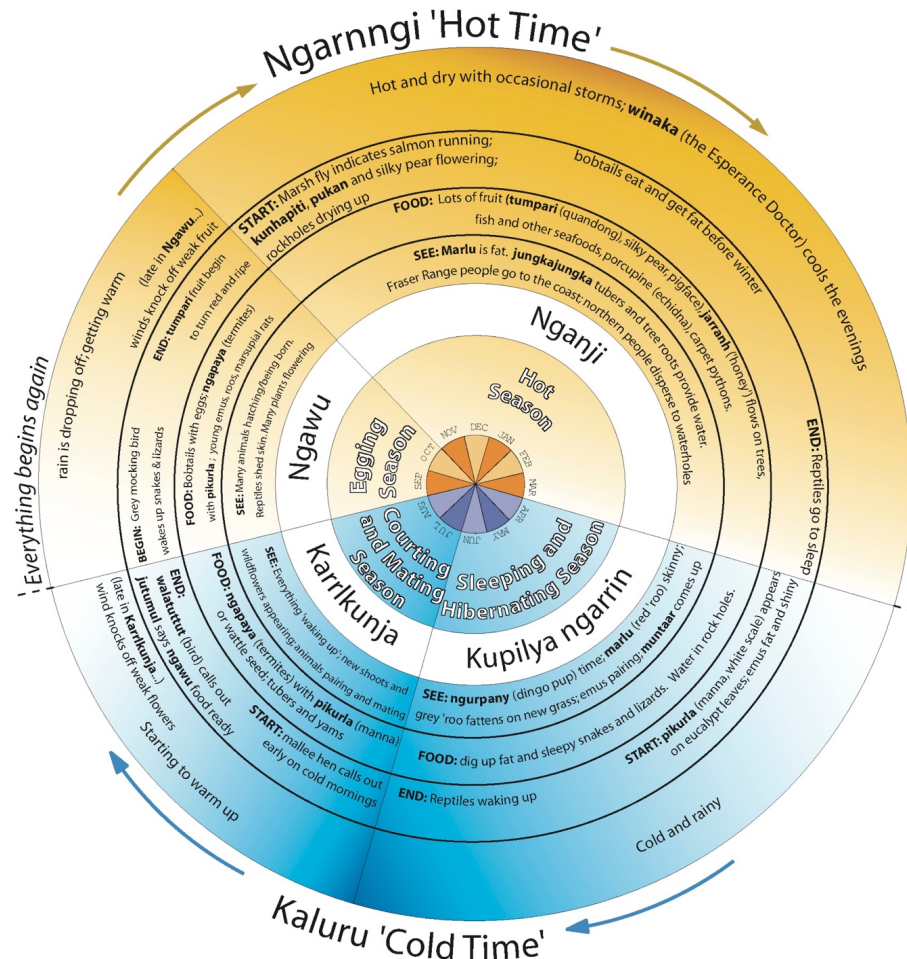
Ngawu
the egging season

Nganji
the hot season

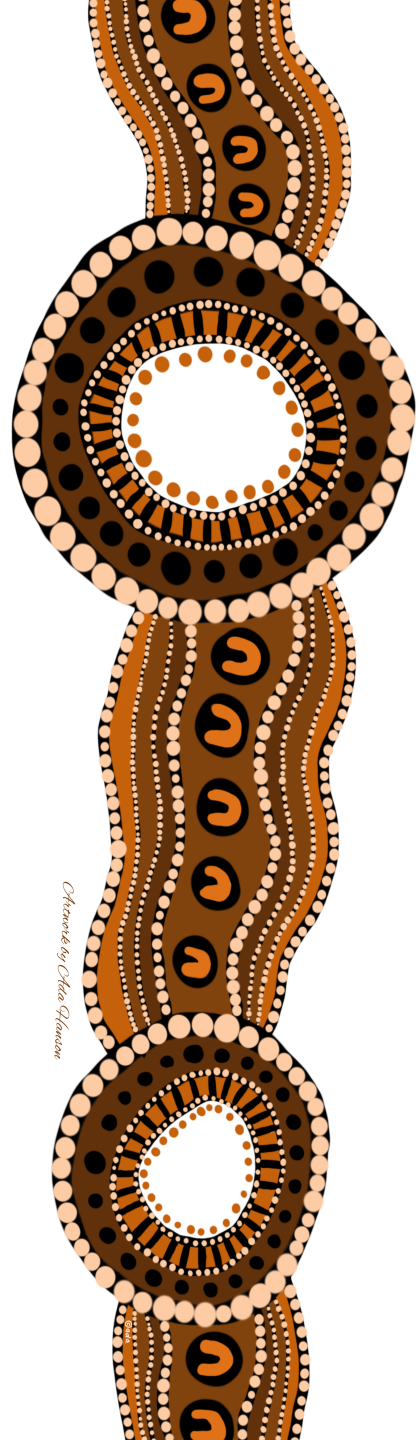
Karrikunja
courting and mating season

Kupilya ngarrin
sleeping and hibernating season

Kaluru
the cold time



Note: Timing of Ngadju seasons in terms of European months are approximations



Mirniny

wilu kutjarra *two summers*

kantji mula *the time for March flies*

paartingkarra *lots of paarti grubs*

‘ngurra’ as a time reference

ngurra is glossed as *home, camp, house, shelter, heart-land*.

A recurrent theme in many languages is a connection between space and diurnal time, with 'day' reference replaceable with a term that means 'space, region, country, camp'. Thus, McGregor (1994a:xxii) notes: 'in Gooniyandi the term riwi 'camp, place' is used to refer to a day (this presumably based on the association of a camping place with a day).

McGregor quoted by Austin 1998



Cundeelee Wangka

Ka paluru mayi wiyangka nyinangu, ngurra 40, pira kutjarra nguwarnpa. Nyin-nyinarra tjuni anymatjarrarringu.

ka paluru mayi wiya+ngka nyina+ngu ngurra 40 pira kutjarra nguwarnpa. nyin nyin+arra tjuni anymatjarra+rri+ngu

and 3sg food no+INCH sit+PAST camp 40 moon two nearly. sit sit+? stomach hungry?+INCH+PAST

And he stayed in that place for 40 days, nearly two months. Then after staying (in that state) his stomach became very hungry.

Cundeelee Wangka Verb Endings

Accurate
glossing of
Australian
languages time
concepts is
critical

	-l	zero	-n	-ng
Future	wana <u>lku</u> <i>will follow</i>	nyina <u>ku</u> <i>will sit</i>	tj <u>unku</u> <i>will put it</i>	yung <u>ku</u> <i>will give it</i>
Imperative (Command)	wana <u>la</u> <i>follow</i>	nyina <i>sit</i>	tju <u>rra</u> <i>put it</i>	yu <u>wa</u> <i>give it</i>
Continuous Command	wana <u>nma</u> <i>keep following</i>	nyina <u>ma</u> <i>keep sitting</i>	tju <u>nama</u> <i>keep putting it</i>	yung <u>ama</u> <i>keep giving it</i>
Continuous Future	wana <u>nma</u> <i>will keep following</i>	nyina <u>ma</u> <i>will keep sitting</i>	tju <u>nama</u> <i>will keep putting</i>	yung <u>ama</u> <i>will keep giving</i>
Present	wana <u>rni</u> <i>following</i>	nyina <u>nvi</u> <i>sitting</i>	tju <u>nanvi</u> <i>putting</i>	yung <u>anvi</u> <i>giving</i>
Past	wana <u>rn</u> <i>followed</i>	nyina <u>ngu</u> <i>sat/stayed</i>	tju <u>nu</u> <i>put</i>	yung <u>u</u> <i>gave</i>
Participle	wana <u>ra</u> <i>having followed</i>	nyina <u>rra</u> <i>having sat</i>	tju <u>nkula</u> <i>having put</i>	yung <u>kula</u> <i>having given</i>
Past Continuous	wana <u>rantja</u> wana <u>rangi</u> <i>was following</i>	nyina <u>rrantja</u> nyina <u>rrangi</u> <i>was sitting</i>	tju <u>nkulantja</u> tju <u>nkulangi</u> <i>was putting</i>	yung <u>kulantja</u> yung <u>kulangi</u> <i>was giving</i>
Habitual	wana <u>lpay</u> <i>follower</i>	nyina <u>pavi</u> <i>always sitting</i>	tju <u>nkupay</u> <i>always putting</i>	yung <u>kupay</u> <i>giver</i>
Cessative	wana <u>lwiya</u> wana <u>ltjarra</u> <i>stop following</i>	nyina <u>wiya</u> nyina <u>tjarra</u> <i>stop sitting</i>	tju <u>kuwiya</u> tju <u>kutjarra</u> <i>stop putting it</i>	yung <u>kuwiya</u> yung <u>kutjarra</u> <i>stop giving</i>
Intention	wana <u>ntjakitja</u> <i>intend to follow</i>	nyina <u>ntjakitja</u> <i>intend to sit</i>	tju <u>nkuntjakitja</u> <i>intend to put it</i>	yung <u>kuntjakitja</u> <i>intend to give</i>
Desire	wana <u>ntjaku</u> <i>want to follow</i>	nyina <u>ntjaku</u> <i>want to follow</i>	tju <u>nkuntjaku</u> <i>want to put it</i>	yung <u>kuntjaku</u> <i>want to give</i>
Circumstantial	wana <u>ntjala</u> <i>when he followed</i>	nyina <u>ntjala</u> <i>when he sat</i>	tju <u>nkuntjala</u> <i>while he was putting it</i>	yung <u>kuntjala</u> <i>when he gave it</i>
Same subject doing actions	wana <u>ralpi</u> <i>having followed it, he...</i>	nyina <u>rralpi</u> <i>having sat he...</i>	tju <u>nkukulalpi</u> <i>after putting it, he...</i>	pung <u>kulalpi</u> <i>after hitting it, he...</i>

Cundeelee Wangka

**Watingku kuka wakarnu, mantjirnu malingu nyinarringu,
yarlarni, angatjurra, wirlitjarra, kulpa kutipitjangu.**

wati+ngku kuka waka+rnu mantji+rnu mali+ngu nyina+rri+ngu
yarla+rni angatju+rra wirli+tjarra kulpa kuti+pitja+ngu

man+TRNS meat spear+PAST grab+PAST go+PAST sit+IMP+PAST
open+PRES block+IMP stick+INST return go.towards+go+PAST

A man speared an animal, picked it up and went and sat down and
after gutting it, he closed it with a probe stick and went home.



Future verb marker -ku, -lku:

Ngayulu nyinaku.

ngayulu nyina+ku
1sg sit+FUT

I will sit.



Instructions to follow:

Matjirrpā runkala tililku, mirrungka runkala tililku.

matirrpā runka+la tili+lku mirru+ngka runka+la tili+lku
matches rub+IMP light.fire+FUT spear.thrower+LOC
rub+IMP light.fire+FUT

You make fire by striking matches, or by rubbing with the edge of a spear thrower.



Responsibility and not a planned action:

Pitjalinku watingku kuka wakalku marlu.

pitjali+nku wati+ngku kuka waka+lku marlu
travel+FUT man+SUB meat spear+FUT
red.kangaroo

The man will travel around and spear meat, a red kangaroo.

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Artwork by Chela Raman