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DOI:

[10.1515/9783110220377](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110220377)

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Schultze-Berndt, E. S., Malchukov, A. (Ed.), Haspelmath, M. (Ed.), & Comrie, B. (Ed.) (2010). Grammatical properties and classification of three-participant predicates in Jaminjung. In *Studies in Ditransitive Constructions: A Comparative Handbook* (pp. 510-528). de Gruyter, Walter GmbH & Co. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110220377>

Published in:

Studies in Ditransitive Constructions:

Citing this paper

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Grammatical properties and classification of three-participant predicates in Jaminjung

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In *Studies in Ditransitive Constructions*, edited by Andrej Malchukov, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie (eds.), 510-528. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 2010.

FINAL SUBMITTED PRE-PUBLICATION VERSION

1 Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the grammatical properties of three-participant predicates in Jaminjung, a Non-Pama-Nyungan language of Northern Australia. In particular, it discusses two intersecting diagnostics for a subcategorisation of these predicates – one being their morphosyntactic behaviour, the other their overt classification by means of closed-class, classificatory verbs. The focus will be on a small class of predicates which can be identified as truly ditransitive (or trivalent).

The language name Jaminjung is used here, as in other publications, to include two named varieties, Jaminjung and Ngaliwurru, which are mutually intelligible and mainly exhibit lexical differences. Together with a somewhat more distantly related variety, Nungali, already no longer spoken, they belong to the small Jaminjungan (or Western Mirndi) subgroup of the geographically discontinuous Mirndi family.

The traditional country of the Jaminjung, Ngaliwurru and Nungali is located north and south of the Victoria River around the present-day township of Timber Creek, in the north-west of the Northern Territory. The remaining few elderly speakers of the language are however scattered throughout a number of settlements in an area of approximately 500 square kilometers. The speech communities throughout the area are currently shifting to Kriol, an English-lexified Creole language which is now also the first language of children, while Jaminjung is no longer acquired by children.

After an overview of the basic morphosyntactic properties of Jaminjung (Section 2), I discuss first the morphosyntactic behaviour of different types of three-participant predicates (Section 3), and in Section 4 provide a more detailed overview of those predicates which can

be identified as properly ditransitive (or rather, as I will argue, semantically trivalent as evidenced by their formal behaviour, even in the absence of a dedicated ditransitive construction). Section 5 concludes the paper by summarising the formal evidence for a subcategorisation of three-participant predicates in Jaminjung.

2 Grammatical background

2.1 Basic morphosyntactic properties

As a background to the discussion of ditransitive predicates, the basic morphosyntactic properties of Jaminjung are outlined in this section.

Like many Australian languages, Jaminjung has “free” word order – which means that word order is not used to distinguish the grammatical roles of arguments, although it is conditioned by considerations of information packaging in discourse. Also to be expected from an Australian language is ergative alignment. Ergative marking is, however, optional; this holds for all nominal agents as well as free personal pronouns, which more generally pattern like other nominals with respect to case marking. Ablative marking of agents also occurs, but very infrequently (see ex. (28) and Section 3.2). Instrumental marking is identical to the ergative. Other case markers include a dative, locative, allative, ablative, and origin marker, and in addition proprietive, privative, and genitive/possessive markers found on adnominal modifiers and nominal predicates. Absolutive case is unmarked (and not glossed in examples here).

In addition to dependent-marking or “flagging”, Jaminjung also exhibits obligatory indexing (“head-marking”), which is independent of the presence or absence of a coreferential noun phrase. From the point of view of indexing morphology, inflecting verbs fall into two non-overlapping classes. Morphologically intransitive verbs indicate their single argument (S) by a pronominal prefix. Morphologically transitive verbs in their non-reflexive form obligatorily take a paradigm of transitive prefixes which always index the most agentive argument (A) and in addition the patient-like (P) argument. The formal alignment pattern with prefixes is nominative-accusative, i.e. S is generally identical to A, with some irregularities. The order of prefixes with transitive verbs is usually A followed by P, although in some cases a portmanteau prefix is used, and 3rd person singular is not expressed (for these reasons the glossing convention ‘A>P’ is adopted for the transitive prefixes). The “potential/future” (POT) prefix is inserted between the A and nonsingular P prefixes; otherwise they are always contiguous.

There are no morphologically ditransitive verbs; those verbs to be identified as trivalent below behave like morphologically transitive verbs except that it is (usually) the R (recipient-like) participant, not the patient (P) or theme (T), which is indexed by the second part of the prefix. Another way of cross-referencing a third participant is by a pronominal enclitic (which usually, but not always immediately follows the inflecting verb). This is restricted to animate participants, whose role may be that of a beneficiary, addressee, or spatial location/goal (see further Section 3.3).

Example (1) illustrates a morphologically intransitive verb, *-ijga* ‘go’, with its single pronominal prefix, and a dative noun phrase in purposive function. Since the referent of this noun phrase is inanimate, it is not indexed by a pronominal enclitic.

- (1) *mangarra-wu=gayi=gun* *nga-w-ijga*
 plant.food-DAT=ALSO=CONTR 1SG-POT-go
 ‘I’m going to go for food also’

Example (2) shows a morphologically transitive verb, *-anjama* ‘bring’, with a pronominal prefix indexing a 3rd person acting on a 3rd person; the prefixes are coreferential with the ergative-marked noun phrase (A) and the absolutive noun phrase (P), respectively. This example also illustrates an oblique pronominal clitic (in this case, hosted by the P noun phrase) indexing the beneficiary.

- (2) *gujarding-ni* *ngarrgina-ni*
 mother-ERG 1SG:POSS-ERG
 gan-anjama-ny *yinju=biya=nggu,* *wajgany*
 3SG>3SG-bring-PST PROX=now=2SG.OBL honey
 ‘my mother brought this (food) for you, honey’

Reflexives and reciprocals of morphologically transitive verbs are marked by the same suffix *-ja* (IPF)/*-ji* (elsewhere) and are only distinguished by the number of their argument. Reflexive/reciprocal verbs take a pronominal prefix from the intransitive rather than the transitive paradigm.

- (3) *wagurra-ni* *buny-nginangga-ji*
 stone-ERG/INST 3DU-hit.with.edge-REFL.PRS
 ‘The two are throwing stones at each other’, ‘the two are hitting
 each other with stones’

While indexing for either one or two arguments is thus obligatory, argument noun phrases can be freely omitted if recoverable from the context, as in the second clause of (4) (in fact it is

virtually impossible to find a non-elicited example of a three-participant clause with three full noun phrases).

- (4) *yatha*, *bilimab* *nga-yu*, *binij*,
all.right fill.up 1SG>3SG-say.do.PST finish
nga-ngarna-ny
1SG>3SG-give-PST
'all right, I filled it up; having finished, I gave it to her'
(from a short narrative about digging a soak to get
freshwater for a thirsty grandchild)

As there are no complement-taking predicates there is no obligatory deletion of arguments. There is therefore no way of determining a hierarchy of grammatical relations by the possibilities of either deletion or ellipsis. Neither does relativisation provide a test for such a hierarchy, since the function of relative clauses is fulfilled by a general subordinate clause (“adjoined relative clause”) which does not require an antecedent and can also have a locative or temporal interpretation.

Some further morphosyntactic characteristics of Jaminjung should be noted. There is no nominal incorporation, no passive or antipassive voice, and no valency-changing derivational morphology except for the reflexive/reciprocal suffix on inflecting verbs. However, a choice of different inflecting verbs in a complex predicate construction partly fulfils valency-changing functions (see further Section 3.4). Also related to the existence of a closed-class of inflecting verbs and the prevalence of complex predicates is the absence of action nominalisation. No nominalised forms of inflecting verbs exist, and uninflecting verbs only allow for agent nominalisation (see ex. (6)).

2.2 Closed-class verbs and complex predicates

A pervasive feature of Jaminjung lexicon and grammar is the small class of inflecting verbs (IVs) – there are only about 35 verbs exhibiting the properties of pronominal prefixing and tense and mode affixation illustrated in (1) to (3) above, with some variation in the number of verbs depending on the dialect affiliation and also the age of individual speakers. The existence of closed-class verbs is an areal feature in Northern Australian languages, although numbers of IVs vary considerably. It has been argued that because of their closed-class nature, these verbs have a classificatory function, i.e. they function in a way parallel to nominal classifiers in the nominal domain, but in the domain of verbs/events (cf. Capell 1979, Schultze-Berndt 2000, 2003; Wilson 1999, McGregor 2002, Amberber, Baker & Harvey

2007). We will return to the relevance of this classificatory nature of verbs for the subclassification of three-participant predicates in Section 5.

Inflecting verbs may occur on their own, as simple predicates, as illustrated in (1) to (3), and do so relatively frequently (40% of tokens in a text count, across genres). In order to express semantically specific “verbal” meanings, IVs combine with members of a distinct, open part of speech, variously labelled “coverbs”, “preverbs”, “verbal particles”, and “uninflecting verbs” (UVs) in the literature. It is the last term (UV) which will be adopted here, following McGregor (2002).

Examples (5) to (8) illustrate the semantic variety and range of uninflecting verbs (printed in boldface) appearing in complex predicates. Example (5) shows that a UV may precede or follow the IV, although the former is much more frequent. Example (6) contains a UV as part of a complex predicate (*lurr* ‘pierce’) as well as a nominalised UV (*derl* ‘draw’).

- (5) *gujarding=biya* *ga-ngga* ***murdab***,
 mother=now 3SG-go.PRS forage
 buru *ga-ram=nu*
 return 3SG-come.PRS=3SG.OBL
 ‘the mother then goes hunting, and comes back for her (the child)’
- (6) ***lurr*** *nga-yijja-ny* ***derl-derl-ngarna-ni***
 pierce 1SG>3SG-poke-PST RDP-draw-ASSOC-ERG/INST
 ‘I pierced it with a pencil’

The way in which the choice of a different IV with the same UV achieves the same function as a valency-changing derivation is illustrated in (7) and (8). The UV here is *jab* ‘become detached, of long entities normally attached at one end point such as hair, feathers or grass’. An inchoative interpretation is achieved by the combination with the intransitive general motion IV *-ijga* ‘go’; a causative interpretation of ‘pluck, pull out, weed’ by a combination with the IV *-mila* ‘get/handle’, an IV which is used for a wide variety of events involving manipulation, including ‘getting/obtaining’.

- (7) *marring* *wirib*, ***jab*** *ga-ngga* *wirra*
 bad dog come.off 3SG-go.PRS hair
 ‘the dog is sick, it is losing hair’

- (8) *warnda=biyang jab-jab burra-mila*
 grass=now RDP-come.off 3PL>3SG-get/handle.IPF
 ‘grass they then used to pull out’

Complex predicates of the Jaminjung type exhibit similarities with serial verbs but also differences. Apart from the fact that the components of the construction belong to different parts of speech, the most important difference for the purpose of this paper is that uninflecting verbs are not regularly employed to introduce e.g. recipient, beneficiary or instrumental arguments in the way many serial verb languages employ verbs originally meaning ‘give’ or ‘take’. A few UVs may however increase the valency of the complex predicate in comparison with the IV with which it is construed; this will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.4.

3 Morphosyntactic behaviour of three-participant predicates

In Jaminjung, simple and complex predicates denoting events which – from a semantic perspective – involve three participants, fall into two types: trivalent predicates proper and predicates involving a recipient/beneficiary type of participant. These will be discussed in 3.1 and 3.3, respectively. In 3.2, I will argue that although their morphosyntactic behaviour allows us to identify trivalent predicates proper, one cannot speak of a dedicated ditransitive construction in Jaminjung. Section 3.4 discusses the limited possibility of alternation between the two types, by means of combining the same UV with different inflecting verbs.

3.1 Trivalent predicates proper

Trivalent predicates proper constitute a small class which is distinguished from all other predicates in Jaminjung by allowing two absolutive objects, corresponding to both the theme-like (T) and the recipient-like (R) participant. These predicates thus meet the more restrictive definition of ditransitive predicates proposed by Kittilä (2006). In the terminology of Malchukov et al. (this volume), they exhibit neutral alignment as far as case marking (“flagging”) is concerned, which is a cross-linguistically common strategy. This is illustrated in (9) and (10) for the inflecting verb *-ngarna* ‘give’.

- (9) *ngiya, Mam, nga-ngarna-m=biya bugarli*
 PROX Mum 1SG>3SG-give-PRS=now cross-cousin
 ‘this one, Mum, I give it to my cousin now (a necklace that speaker was making)’

- (10) *ngayug bun-ngarna-ny thanthu marlayi*
 1SG 3PL>1SG-give-PST DEM woman
 ‘me, they gave that woman’ (i.e. ‘they gave me that woman’)

As these examples also show, indexing follows a “secondary object” (Dryer 1986) or “secundative” alignment (Haspelmath 2005, Malchukov et al., this volume), that is, the recipient-like participant (R) rather than the theme-like participant (T) is represented by the second pronominal prefix (recall that only one non-agentive argument can be cross-referenced by a pronominal prefix). It is also the recipient that is coreferential with A in reflexive/reciprocal formation, as shown in (23) and (24) below.

The same context that gave rise to example (10), i.e. that of giving women in marriage – one of the few contexts where both T and R are animate – also allows for “primary object” or “indirective” alignment, i.e. indexing of the theme-like argument in the same way as the patient of monotransitive verbs, as shown in (11). (Here it is clear from the context, a frequently-told mythological narrative, that a potential father-in-law refuses to give his two daughters to a specific man). Examples are too scarce to allow any generalisations about what triggers the choice of one or the other alignment in these contexts.

- (11) *gurrany ganubuny-ngarna-nyi nuwina jalig*
 1SG 3SG>3DU:POT-give-IPF 3SG:POSS child
 ‘he wouldn’t give (him) the two, his children’

Thus, members of the small class of trivalent predicates proper in Jaminjung can be identified by the combination of two properties: (usually) R rather than T is indexed on the inflecting verb, and both T and R are in the absolutive if they are encoded by a full noun phrase. This type of mixed alignment of the secundative indexing and neutral flagging is cross-linguistically common for three-participant predicates (see Malchukov et al., this volume). The semantics of trivalent predicates, defined in this way, is the topic of Section 4. In the next section, I will however argue that the combination of these properties does not strictly speaking amount to a ditransitive construction.

3.2 Trivalent predicates without a ditransitive construction

In Section 3.1 I employed the semantically-based term “trivalent”, rather than the term “ditransitive”, when discussing a specific class of predicates. This is because of my claim that despite appearances, there is actually no dedicated ditransitive construction in Jaminjung. The

fundamental assumption here is that argument structure constructions can be identified partly independently of the meaning and valency of the associated predicates, as recurrent formal patterns with their own constructional meanings (e.g. Goldberg 1995, Croft 2001).

Applied to ditransitives in Jaminjung, a number of more specific claims follow. First, as functionally oriented linguists have long recognised (cf. e.g. Lehmann 1988, Himmelmann 1996, Bickel 2000, Croft 2001: 229), pronominal indexing is not simply agreement; rather, indexing and case marking are structurally and semantically distinct, and have grammaticalized from different origins. In Jaminjung, it is even possible for core participants to be marked by a “semantic” case – e.g. by the ablative for Agents as in (28) – while still being indexed on the inflecting verb (Schultze-Berndt 2000: 168-169, 2002).

Second, having thus established the indexing and the flagging constructions as independent entities, the indexing construction is identical with bivalent and trivalent predicates – in both cases, the inflecting verbs are morphologically transitive, i.e. they take exactly the same paradigm of pronominal prefixes. The only difference lies in the alignment of the second prefix slot with the participant that semantically can be identified as “P” or “R”, respectively. Moreover, as we have seen, with trivalent predicates alignment can shift between the “R” and the “T” participant for reasons that do not lie in the valency of the predicates, but in the animacy of the participant referents. With the same IV, alignment can also shift depending on which UV it combines with. For example, the inflecting verb with a general meaning of caused change of location, *-arra* ‘put’, usually – i.e. as a simple verb and in most complex predicates – indexes the T/P participant; an example is (15). However, with a few UVs such as *yurrg* ‘show’ (see Section 4.3) it indexes the R participant. While it thus makes sense to speak of trivalent predicates with lexically conditioned R indexing, this will be determined on the level of the complex predicate, not on the level of its individual components, and the lexical conditioning can be overridden by considerations of animacy. In Schultze-Berndt (2000: Ch 4) I have argued that there is only a single construction corresponding to any transitive pronominal prefix, the “General Actor/Undergoer” Indexing construction, which links the participant of the event which is conceptualised as the “first cause” with the Actor prefix, and the most affected participant with the Undergoer prefix. From a cross-linguistic perspective, Kittilä (2006) also argues that in terms of semantic transitivity, affectedness in particular, R outranks T for verbs of the ‘give’ type, and that this is the reason for the frequent “patient-like” properties of the R participant.

The second diagnostics for trivalent predicates proper, the possibility to take a double absolutive, at first sight appears to be more reliable in terms of a formal distinction between a

ditransitive and a transitive construction. In this case, too, however, one is confronted with a formally identical construction with different alignment properties: double absolutes can also denote an external possessor and a body part, as illustrated in (12); only the possessor is indexed on the verb. An additional absolutive argument can also appear in an otherwise intransitive clause, as shown in (13).

- (12) *ngamayag-di* *gan-birri-m* (*ngayug*) *burru*
 diarrhoea-ERG 3SG>1SG-bite-PRS 1SG belly
 ‘my belly hurts because of diarrhoea’
 (lit. ‘diarrhoea is biting me belly’)

- (13) *lum* *nga-ngga* *wirlga*
 swell.up 1SG-go.PRS foot
 ‘my foot is swelling up’ (lit. ‘I am swelling foot’)

Two formal analyses come to mind: according to the first analysis, one can distinguish two double absolutive constructions, one with a constructional meaning that aligns the absolutive noun phrases with a recipient and a theme participant of ditransitive verbs, the other with a constructional meaning that aligns them with a body part and an external possessor. This analysis does not account very well for the fact that double absolutes are in fact rare; it is usually only one of the participants that is overtly encoded as a noun phrase. Moreover, as mentioned briefly in Section 2, agents can appear in the absolutive as well, as ergative marking is optional. Therefore, in Schultze-Berndt (2000: Ch. 4) I have proposed an analysis according to which there is only one “Absolutive NP” construction, with a constructional meaning that is the same in any of its uses: it merely signals core participant status, i.e. inclusion in the valency of the predicate (irrespective of the participant’s semantic role), or else association with a core participant by virtue of an inalienable part-whole relationship. This however eliminates “double absolutive” as a diagnostics of a dedicated ditransitive construction. Even in the absence of such a construction it is possible to diagnose trivalent predicates in the way indicated above: they have three core participants and therefore license up to three absolutive NPs (although the first one is more usually ergative-marked), and either the R or the T participant (usually the former) may be indexed by the second part of the inflecting verb’s pronominal prefix cluster.

3.3 Predicates with dative/oblique R

Apart from trivalent predicates proper, there is a second type of three-participant predicate. With these, it is always the agent-like (A) and the theme-like (T) participants which are indexed on the inflecting verb, that is, alignment is of the “primary object” or “indirective” type. The recipient-like participant (R) gets encoded by an (optional) dative-marked noun phrase and in addition, if it is animate, by an oblique pronominal enclitic. The semantic roles of R range from true recipient to goal of transfer, beneficiary, addressee, purpose, and topic of interest, with often fuzzy boundaries between these categories. Interestingly, speakers maintain a distinction between the range of roles just discussed, and malefactive. Currently available data are limited to speech act participants in a malefactive role, but at least for this category, the absolutive, not the oblique pronominal enclitic is used. Compare the forms of the pronominal enclitics in examples (14a) (beneficiary) and (14b) (malefactive).

- (14) a *marda* *yirr-irriga-nyi=**burr**ag* *jalog-gu*
 antbed 1&3PL>3SG-heat-IPF=3PL.OBL child-DAT
 ‘we used to heat antbed (termite mound, used as external cure)
 for the children’

- b *burrb* *yarri-minda=**burri*** *mangarra*
 finish IRR:2PL>3SG-eat=3PL.ABS plant.food
 ‘you lot might eat up all the food on them’

Because of the wide range of semantic roles covered by dative NPs and oblique pronominals, these two overlapping constructions are not restricted to “R participants” inherent in the semantics of trivalent verbs; rather, the same formal means are employed for adjuncts such as beneficiaries and purposive expressions. It is in fact questionable whether for any predicate displaying this morphosyntactic behaviour the R participant is truly part of the predicate’s meaning, since all of them are perfectly acceptable without an R participant that is either explicitly mentioned or understood. For example, the meaning of the UV *dalag* ‘send’ (as part of a complex predicate with the IV *-arra* ‘put’) does not entail transfer of ownership, since it can also be used in the meaning of ‘send off, set free’, without any indication of a goal or recipient; compare (15a) and (15b).

- (15) a. *ani* *thanthu* *gujugujugu=**malang***
 only DEM RDP:big=GIVEN
 dalag *burr-arra-nyi=yirrag* *beg*

send 3PL>3SG-put-IPF=1&3PL.OBL bag
 ‘only those big ones they used to send us, big bags’ (of salt)

- b. *dalag ganuny-garra-ny ngalarr-ni*
 send 3SG>3DU-put-PST police-ERG
 ‘(The two men had to stay in jail until they got old.) The policemen sent them off / let them go then.’

The optional nature of the R participant is even clearer in the case of beneficiaries and purpose expressions (the latter type illustrated in (1) above). Beneficiaries can be construed with almost any event given the right context, and as (16) shows, it may or may not be the intention of the agent to act for the benefit of another participant (in the case of a fish swallowing a bait such an intention is most certainly absent).

- (16) *ngilthig=nyanying gani-w-arra=ngunggu yag-di*
 swallow=properly 3SG>3SG-POT-put=2SG.OBL fish-ERG
 ‘it should swallow it properly for you, the fish’ (i.e. the line should not be pulled in too quickly)

A similar conclusion, that of R not necessarily being included in the valency of the predicate, can be drawn with respect to those predicates of speaking/verbal interaction which do not fall into the class of trivalent predicates proper (for the latter, see Section 4). They include predicates formed with the highly polysemous IV *-ju(nggu)* ‘say, do, become’ which as a simple verb is used to frame quotations, as in (17) and (18), and as part of complex predicates, to denote different manners of speaking or speech acts such as ‘lie’ or ‘promise’. With these predicates, the addressee of the speech is again (optionally) encoded as a dative noun phrase and/or an oblique pronominal clitic (17); the same type of expressions can however also refer to the topic of the speech (18).

- (17) *jajigi gani-yu=nu dawujban-gu*
 groper 3SG>3SG-say/do-PRS=3SG.OBL perch-DAT
 “*ba-nijbi=mindag gugu*”
 IMP-sing.magic.song=1&2DU.OBL water
 ‘The (mythical) Groper said to the (mythical) Perch: “Sing up water for you and me by performing a magic song!”’

- (18) “*majani yan-ba*”
 maybe IRR:3SG>1SG-bite
gan-unggu-m=nu *jijigurrng-gu*
 3SG>3SG-say/do-PRS=3SG.OBL marsupial.rat-DAT
 “‘maybe it will bite me’ he says about the rat’ (boy in Frog Story)

Most semantic types of predicate included in a “wide” definition of three-participant predicates such as that offered by Margetts & Austin (2007: 398) behave like the predicates just illustrated which take a dative/oblique argument (or perhaps rather, adjunct). This also includes expressions of obtaining (for someone’s benefit) such as ‘buying’, expressions of ballistic motion (‘throw’), and expressions of creation or preparation for a participant’s benefit. In addition, there are predicates of caused change of location (usually formed with the IV *-arra* ‘put’), like that in (19a), which take a locative- or allative-marked goal expression. These will not be considered in this paper.

3.4 “Alternations” achieved by change of inflecting verb

Jaminjung allows no alternations between the two encoding strategies discussed in 3.1 and 3.3 with the same predicate – that is, a given simple IV or complex predicate cannot shift between the double-absolutive construction with secundative indexing, and the dative/oblique R construction. However, it is possible for some UVs to participate in more than one of the types just identified, by combining with different IVs. Consider the case of *lawu* ‘pour, spill’. In (19a), this UV is combined with the IV of spatial transfer, *-arra* ‘put’. In this case, the recipient/beneficiary is expressed by a dative noun phrase and an oblique pronominal clitic; in addition, a spatial goal is specified by a locative-marked NP. The R participant can also be unambiguously encoded as a recipient by combining the UV with the IV *-ngarna* ‘give’, as in (19b). In this case, R is indexed by a verbal prefix rather than an enclitic, and consequently, the overall event is construed as one of transfer of possession, rather than as mere spatial transfer (see further Section 5).

- (19) a *lawu nga-w-arra=gunyag birrigud-gi*
 pour 1SG>3SG-POT-put=2DU.OBL tin-LOC
 ‘I will pour it for you two, in the tin’
- b *ngabuny-ngarna=biya na: lawu*
 1SG>2DU:POT-give=now now pour
 ‘I will pour you two (tea)’

A second example of this type of “alternation” concerns the UV *bunug* (Jaminjung) / *jawurra* (Ngaliwurru) ‘steal’. Most frequently, these are combined with the IV *-mili* ‘get/handle’, by which stealing is categorised as a method of obtaining something. This expression has to be used whenever T (the stolen entity) is not directly physically removed from R, as in (20a). (Here, obviously, “R” is not a recipient, but a malefactive/source; this is one of the rare examples where this is indexed by an oblique rather than absolutive clitic.) If T is physically taken away from R, it is possible to use the inflecting verb *-junga* ‘take away from, deprive, rob’ instead, which results in a truly trivalent complex predicate; thus, R is indexed by a pronominal prefix, as in (20b).

- (20) a *yirrajgina-wu* *gujargding-gu jawagun*
 1&3PL.POSS-DAT mother-DAT others
 jawurra *yirra-mila=burrage*
 steal 1&3PL>3SG-get/handle.IPF=3PL.OBL
 ‘we stole some on our mothers’ (yams after having been prepared
 by the mothers, but left in a river to leach)
- b *majani bunug bun-junga-ny*
 maybe steal 3DU>1SG-take.away-PST
 ‘maybe they robbed me’ (the context is a missing bank card)

These alternations show how the choice of classificatory inflecting verb can determine the alignment of participants of three-participant predicates. As we will see in Section 5, however, the correlation between IV and alignment is not one-to-one; rather, the same IV can sometimes display more than one type of morphosyntactic behaviour depending on the lexical semantics of the UV.

4 Semantics of trivalent predicates

In the remainder of this paper, I will concentrate on a discussion of the first class of predicates discussed in the preceding section, termed trivalent predicates proper, since only these exhibit the morphosyntactic behaviour of ditransitive predicates. Trivalent predicates in Jaminjung form a small class, comprising the inflecting verb *-ngarna* ‘give’, its semantic converse *-junga* ‘take away from, rob’, and complex predicates formed with these two IVs, and a small number of complex predicates formed with other, otherwise monotransitive verbs. These will be discussed in turn in Sections 4.1 to 4.3 below.

4.1 Trivalent predicates based on the inflecting verb *-ngarna* ‘give’

The most prominent member – in terms of text frequency and polysemy – of the class of trivalent predicates is the verb *-ngarna* ‘give’. Its uses as a simple predicate have already been amply illustrated (examples (4), (9), (10) and (11)). As part of a complex predicate, it occurs with UVs such *juwi* ‘hand over’, *yirrginy/yulij* ‘do something symmetrically or reciprocally’, *burrb* ‘all, to completion’ (21), *jawug* ‘do (give) something for a short time; lend’, or *lawu* ‘pour’ (see (19b) above), thus in expressions which entail successful transfer of a tangible possession or commodity to a recipient.

- (21) *ngarrgina* *mali* *burrb* *ganurru-ngarna-ny*
 1SG.POSS thing completely 3SG>3PL-give-PST
 ‘he gave all my things away to them’

In addition, the verb *-ngarna* ‘give’ can be used in the sense of transfer of something intangible – i.e. knowledge or skills, as illustrated in (22), where the IV is combined with the UV *juwum* ‘show’ which is a loan from Kriol.

- (22) *janjunud* *mangurn* *juwum* *burrarra-ngarna-ny*
 those white.person show 3PL>3PL-give-PST
 bulawula
 painting
 ‘they showed those white people the (rock) paintings’

Another, minor use of the verb *-ngarna* ‘give’ is in a sense of spatial configuration of the “A” participant with respect to the “R” participant, or indeed of both participants reciprocally, as in (23).

- (23) *mulurung* *buny-ngarna-ji* *buliki* *jirram*
 buttocks 3DU-give-REFL.PRS cow two
 ‘the two are turning/showing their backsides to each other,
 the two cows’

For the sake of completeness, two further, specialised uses of the inflecting verb *-ngarna* ‘give’ will be mentioned here. The first of these is only attested for the reflexive/reciprocal form of the verb. This form is used to express reciprocal ‘telling’, thereby filling a gap in the paradigm of the defective verb *-ju(nggu)* ‘say/do’ which does not have a reflexive/reciprocal

form. In this use of the verb, T is a quotation, and R is encoded by the reflexive/reciprocal suffix, indicating that R is coreferential with A.

- (24) *“ning ba-manggu” yirri-ngarna-ji*
 kill IMP-hit 1&3PL-give-REFL.PRS
 “‘kill it!’ we say to each other (when hunting goannas)’

The second specialised use of *-ngarna* is restricted to complex predicates. This use can be subsumed under the cross-linguistically attested figurative use of ‘give’ verbs termed “Schematic interaction” by Newman (1996: 201-210), and is reminiscent of English constructions of the type *give something a wash*. While in English it is a noun phrase specifying the action which metaphorically fills the slot of the theme-like participant, in Jaminjung, this role is fulfilled by an uninflecting verb which does not have full argument status morphosyntactically. Therefore, expressions of this type are formally monotransitive. For example, *-ngarna* is in opposition to verbs of contact and impact such as *-ijja* ‘poke’. The latter, as can be seen in (6) above, entails that contact of a specific type has been successfully made, and categorises the event according to the type of instrument or body part involved in the contact. The former, in contrast, yields a conative interpretation, i.e. the action is described as being directed at someone with no resulting impact, as in (25).

- (25) *lurr-lurr buny-ngarna-ji langiny-ni*
 RDP-pierce 3DU-give-REFL.PRS stick-ERG/INST
 ‘the two are poking at each other with a stick’

The interpretation of complex verbs of this type is not necessarily conative, however. Rather, the semantic component which appears to be common to all of them is that the patient is affected not by direct contact, but in some indirect way. For example, in (26), A affects P by its absence.

- (26) *yurl=biya burru-ma, warduj ganurru-ngarna-ny*
 chase=now 3PL>3SG-hit.PST disappear 3SG>3PL-give-PST
 ‘they chased him, but he went missing on them’

4.2 Predicates based on the inflecting verb *-junga* ‘take away from’

Apart from *-ngarna* ‘give’, there is only one inflecting verb which belongs to the class of trivalent predicates; this is its semantic converse *-junga* ‘deprive, take away from, rob’, which entails that T is physically taken out of R’s immediate possession. (“R” clearly does

not stand for “recipient” here but for the more abstract role of the animate affected by a transfer of possession.) Unlike *-ngarna* ‘give’, *-junga* ‘take away from’ is a marginal verb in terms of its text frequency, and is never found as a simple verb. Almost all of its occurrences are with a single UV which appears to have the same meaning as the IV, *birrg* ‘take something away from someone’. As illustrated in (27) and (28), potential contexts for this complex predicate range from the most everyday occurrences – a playful fight between children – to the serious offence of eloping with another man’s wife.

- (27) *birrg* *gan-junga-na* *majani*
 take.away 3SG>1SG-take.away-IPF maybe
- ngarrgina* *mali* *garlagarla-gina*
 1SG:POSS thing play-POSS
- ‘she used to take (them) away from me, for example, my things, toys’ (talking about her sister when both were young)

- (28) *bat* *majani* *janyung-ngunyi* *ngurlu* *burru-wu-ngawu*,
 but maybe other-ABL desire 3PL>3SG-POT-see
- birrg* *bunyu-wu-yunga*
 take.away 3PL>2SG-POT-take.away
- ‘but maybe others will set eye on her (your wife) and rob you of her’

Only three other UVs are attested with *-junga* ‘take away from’: One is (not surprisingly) *bunug/jawurra* ‘steal, take something illicitly’ (see (20) above); the others are *gub* ‘come off, come out, get detached’ (used in the context of taking someone’s clothes off), and the more general *burrb* ‘finish, do to completion’.

4.3 Complex predicates based on other verbs

There are only a handful of other trivalent predicates attested in the current lexical and text database for Jaminjung, an observation which confirms the generalisation that ditransitive constructions with neutral alignment are more restricted lexically (Malchukov et al., this volume). These are complex predicates formed with the UVs *yurrg* ‘show, point’, *thirrang* ‘show by holding up’, *yanggi* ‘ask, request’, and *nyilng* ‘promise a wife’. The first three of these take *-arra* ‘put’ as their inflecting verb. As argued in Schultze-Berndt (2000: 238-249), the basic meaning of this IV is one of caused change of locative relation, with the location

participant inherent in the meaning of the verb. One could thus argue that both ‘showing’ and ‘asking’ are encoded in Jaminjung as metaphorical spatial transfer. The recipient (R) takes the place of the (metaphorical) location, but is also promoted – over T – in terms of being the participant indexed on the verb. This morphosyntactic behaviour is clearly triggered by the UVs, since in all other uses of the IV *-arra* ‘put’ it is the theme/patient which gets indexed.

Predicates involving the UVs *yurrg* ‘show, point’ and *thirrang* ‘show by holding up’ behave in the same way, so only the former is illustrated here.

- (29) *mulurru-ni* *gagawuli yurrg gan-garra-ny*
 old.woman-ERG long.yam show 3SG>1SG-put-PST
Gilwi-ni
 [place.name]-LOC
 ‘the woman showed me yam in Gilwi’

Expressions formed with *yanggi* ‘ask, request’ behave somewhat differently from other trivalent predicates since the T participant – the topic that is being asked about – is never encoded by an absolutive noun phrase in the way it is with the other trivalent predicates. Rather, it is either encoded by a dative noun phrase as in (30), or by a quotation, or indeed left to interpretation on the basis of the context.

- (30) *en* *janju* *missis-ni*
 and DEM Missis-ERG
yanggi gan-arra-ny gujarding ngarrgina
 ask 3SG>3SG-put-PST mother 1SG:POSS
bulgarding-gu ngarrgina-wu
 father-DAT 1SG:POSS-DAT
 ‘and that Missis asked my mother for (the whereabouts) of my father/about my father’

The last trivalent complex predicate is formed with the UV *nyilng* ‘promise someone a wife’ and the highly polysemous verb *-ma* ‘hit’, which among its senses has one of ‘complete affectedness by non-physical means’ (see Schultze-Berndt 2000: 314-317). As the T participant in this case is by necessity animate, a similar variation with respect to the alignment strategy results to the one already illustrated for *-ngarna* ‘give’ in (10) and (11) above. Thus, in (31a) it is the recipient of the promise which is indexed on the inflecting verb, whereas in (31b), it is the woman to be promised.

- (31) a. *gurrany nami nyilng bunyu-ma-nyi,*
 NEG 2SG promise.wife 3PL>2SG-hit-IPF
ngayug nyilng bun-ma
 1SG promise.wife 3PL>1SG-hit.PST
 ‘not to you they promised her, to me they promised her’
- b. *thanthiya=gun nyilng yirruny-ma=nu*
 DEM=CONTR prom.wife 1&3PL>3DU-hit.PST=3SG.OBL
jirrama nanbarn=nunthu
 two wife=KIN3
 ‘those ones we promised him, his two wives’

The brief overview of trivalent predicates in Jaminjung provided here shows that either of the two components of a complex predicate can be responsible for the trivalent status of their combination (see Schultze-Berndt 2000: Ch 4 for a detailed account of argument merger in Jaminjung). Complex predicates formed with *-ngarna* ‘give’ and *-junga* ‘take away from’ are always trivalent, even with UVs which are also attested with bivalent IVs. On the other hand, UVs like *yurrg* ‘show’ and *nyilng* ‘promise wife’ result in trivalent complex predicates even with otherwise bivalent IVs.

On the semantic level, trivalent predicates mainly involve participants which are strongly affected by a physical transfer of possession, either as recipients or as sources. The same encoding is only extended to two other types of predicates, those describing transfer of knowledge and ‘showing’, and those describing speech acts which are likely to require a response or affect the actions of the addressee, ‘asking’ and ‘promising a wife’.

5 Three-participant predicates in a system of overt event classification

A language like Jaminjung offers a unique window on the potential subcategorisation of three-participant predicates, as it operates with two interlocking systems of covert and overt classification; these are illustrated in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

As shown in Section 3, on the basis of the morphosyntactic encoding of the A, T and R participants, three-participant predicates fall into two types, trivalent predicates proper (where R is – usually – indexed on the verb and, if present, encoded by an absolutive NP), and predicates with an R argument or adjunct which is indexed by an oblique pronominal if animate, and optionally encoded by a dative NP. In Fig. 1, these two morphosyntactic types are represented by the two large circles. As the class of trivalent predicates proper is fairly small, while the second class of predicates is open-ended, only the list of predicates included in the left circle should be regarded as exhaustive, and the list included in the right circle as illustrative only. The two circles overlap only in so far as a few uninflecting verbs may participate in both morphosyntactic types in combination with different inflecting verbs (see Section 3.4). An overlap of a somewhat different type concerns expressions of ‘telling’ for which the choice of inflecting verb is morphosyntactically conditioned and in turn conditions the choice of constructions: normally the IV *-junggu* ‘say/do’ is employed in this meaning, except to express the reciprocal, where *-ngarna* ‘give’ has to be used (see Section 4.1).

The second type of subcategorisation of three-participant predicates is achieved in terms of overt classification by semantically generic inflecting verbs, represented in Fig 1 by the smaller, shaded or hatched ovals, annotated with an approximate English gloss of the classificatory IV (in capitals). Two inflecting verbs always fall into the (morphosyntactic) category of trivalent predicates; these are *-ngarna* ‘give’ and its semantic converse *-jungga* ‘take away from’, categorising an event as involving physical transfer of possession or transfer of knowledge, and negative physical transfer of possession, respectively (disregarding here the figurative, monotransitive uses of *-ngarna* ‘give’ briefly discussed in Section 4.1). Another IV which has figured prominently in our discussion, *-arra* ‘put’, categorises an event as one of physical or metaphorical spatial transfer. This category includes expressions such as ‘sending’ (ex. (15)), ‘pouring’ (ex. (19b)), ‘showing’ (ex. (29)), and ‘asking’ (ex. (30)) (all expressed by complex predicates). However, some of these expressions behave like trivalent predicates proper (Section 4.3), and others take a dative/oblique adjunct (Section 3.3), depending on the degree of affectedness ascribed to the R participant. This is why the category defined by the use of the IV *-arra* ‘put’ overlaps with both morphosyntactic categories in Fig. 1. The overt categories defined by means of classificatory verbs may also themselves overlap, if the same UV, or UVs with a similar meaning, can be combined with more than one IV (see Sections 2.2 and 3.4). For example, ‘showing’, i.e. ‘transfer of knowledge’, is usually classified by *-arra* ‘put’, but sometimes also by *-ngarna* ‘give’ (see

Section 4.1), and in both cases the expression is a trivalent predicate, an observation which supports a semantic and cultural link between ‘giving’, ‘teaching’ and ‘showing’.

To conclude, all morphosyntactically trivalent predicates – which can be identified in the absence of a dedicated ditransitive construction (Section 3.2) – have in common a particularly high degree of affectedness, which accounts for their low number and the fact that the R participant is promoted to core status in terms of both indexing (R outranks T) and flagging (R is in absolutive case). With all other predicates, a recipient-like participant is encoded in the same way as a beneficiary, in a construction encompassing a wide range of semantic roles (but excluding malefactive), marked by dative case and oblique pronominal clitics.

Classification by generic inflecting verbs clearly singles out two types of trivalent expression, involving transfer of possession (‘give’) and negative transfer of possession (‘take away, rob’). Several other morphosyntactically trivalent predicates are categorised by the same inflecting verb as expressions of spatial transfer, which may also form complex predicates which are not trivalent in the sense used here but involve a participant which falls into a broad “beneficiary-like” category. An exceptional case is that of the expression for ‘promising a wife’ which is categorised by a verb (*-ma* ‘hit’) which otherwise classifies events of physical impact or complete affectedness.

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first / second / third person
1&2	first person inclusive
1&3	first person exclusive
ABL	Ablative
ALL	Allative
ASSOC	associative derivation “X kind of thing”
CONTR	contrastive focus
DAT	dative
DEM	anaphoric demonstrative
DU	dual
ERG	ergative (same marking as instrumental)
GIVEN	discourse-given NP
IMP	imperative
IPF	past imperfective aspect marker
INST	instrumental (same marking as ergative)
IRR	irrealis
KIN3	his/her kin
LOC	locative
NEG	negation
OBL	oblique (only personal pronouns)
PL	plural
POT	potential/future
PROX	proximate demonstrative
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
RDP	reduplicated segment
REFL	reflexive/reciprocal
SG	singular