Twentieth International Linguistics Olympiad

Bansko (Bulgaria), 23–29 July 2023

Team Contest Problem

The Murrinh-patha dictionary compiled by Chester S. Street with the help of Gregory Panpawa Mollingin 40 years ago, in 1983, begins as follows:

Murrinh-patha is spoken by approximately 1,100 [Aboriginal people] (as either their first or second language) who live at Port Keats — Wadeye, Northern Territory, 250 kilometres to the south-west of Darwin. A small number of Murrinh-patha speakers also live on nearby cattle stations, and a number live at Kununurra, Western Australia.

At the time of the 2016 census, there were 1,973 native speakers of Murrinh-patha. According to some sources, there are more than 2,500 speakers now. It is one of the few Australian Aboriginal languages whose number of speakers has increased and whose usage has expanded over the past generation.

The dictionary includes English–Murrinh-patha and Murrinh-patha–English sections and is 84 pages long. Sometimes there are pictures in the margins. The entries under the letter M in the second section begin on page 57 and end on page 61. All of these pages are reproduced below, with some minor adjustments and omissions. Further examples from the PhD thesis of Michael James Walsh from 1976 have also been added. English translations of the entries on each page are given after the relevant page, in arbitrary order.

(a) Match the Murrinh-patha words and phrases with their English equivalents. Each Murrinh-patha dictionary entry has a single English equivalent.

(b) Restore translation 60-T-54 that was replaced by ***.

(du, m) stands for dual masculine form. (du, f) stands for dual feminine form.

Knowledge of the different species mentioned in the problem is not necessary for solving the problem.

No additional explanation besides the answers is required, nor will be marked.

—Boris Iomdin, Milena Veneva


English text: Boris Iomdin, Milena Veneva.

Good luck!
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57-T-1  the tree is swaying (in the wind)
57-T-2  Can I request something from you?
57-T-3  I desire it [lit. my belly has got it]
57-T-4  I will hold him to my chest
57-T-5  I will give to you
57-T-6  verb negator – archaic
57-T-7  I met him
57-T-8  it will surge
57-T-9  I am out of breath
57-T-10 I know his thoughts
57-T-11 they (du, f) met him
57-T-12 abdomen (belly), the seat of the emotions
57-T-13 I am disillusioned
57-T-14 I rejoiced at the news
57-T-15 I requested something from him
57-T-16 I will sway
57-T-17 I had a stomach ache
57-T-18 I am holding him to my chest (standing)
57-T-19 the boat is ploughing through (the water)
57-T-20 non-conjugated verb: to give
57-T-21 they were passing the thing on/along
57-T-22 I will plough the ground
57-T-23 I will meet him
57-T-24 he is mumbling
57-T-25 I will give to myself
57-T-26 I might get out of breath
57-T-27 large bamboo (used for spears)
57-T-28 I gave to myself
57-T-29 you will continually know their thoughts
57-T-30 pass the word along to him!
57-T-31 I will rejoice for him
57-T-32 I save things

57-T-33 I will save
57-T-34 I don’t know
57-T-35 it surged
57-T-36 I gave to him
57-T-37 pregnant
57-T-38 I will be satisfied
57-T-39 she is making a string design
57-T-40 Give it to me!
57-T-41 they are satisfied
57-T-42 I will know your thoughts [lit. I will see your belly]
57-T-43 I rejoiced for him
57-T-44 I will have a stomach ache

57-T-45 to hold/take to one’s chest
57-T-46 to give
57-T-47 to be puffed out, to be out of breath
57-T-48 to be disappointed with something, to be disillusioned
57-T-49 to request something
57-T-50 to know another’s thoughts
57-T-51 to mumble
57-T-52 to surge (fresh or salt-water)
57-T-53 to give to oneself
57-T-54 to rejoice
57-T-55 to rejoice (at news, etc.)
57-T-56 to meet
57-T-57 to be satisfied
57-T-58 to sway
57-T-59 to pass on/along; to make string designs with one’s hands
57-T-60 to have a stomach ache
57-T-61 to plough
57-T-62 to know another’s thoughts [lit. to see one’s belly]
57-T-63 to save up, to hoard
1 mardarr mardarr kardu

2 MARDAT

3 manhimardatnu

4 mammardat

5 MARDAT

6 i kardu ngamere-ka punemmandat
   ku ngurlmir nhini-nu-yu

7 MARDAT

8 bumardatnu

9 banmardat

10 MARDATAT

11 peninthamardatatmu

12 demninthamardatat

13 MARDARTA

14 bangimardartamu

15 bananmardarta dim

16 MARDAWAL

17 ngurrmardawalnu

18 ngunungannamardawal

19 ngunungannamardalal ngurran

20 MARDAYARRARR

21 mangimardayarrarmu

22 mambgimardayarrarr dim

23 marda yidi nanthi

24 MARDI

25 buynginthamardinu

26 bammnginthamardi

27 mardinhpunku ku

28 yakay ku mardinhpunku

29 magarn mi

30 magulkul nanthi

31 nukunu-ka magulkul pirrimkarrkintha

32 mak nanthi

33 makarduma kardu

34 palngun makarduma

35 MAKUT

36 ku money (<Eng. ‘money’)

37 makarduma kardu

38 malarnpakpak da

39 malarntath thu

40 ku

41 thangku numa ku malarntath
tamngardu?

42 malarnturtuma nanthi

43 malangan ku

44 nanthi

45 mi

46 malgaga ku

47 MARLIP

48

49 marluk nanthi

50 mamadhalert nanthi

51 mamangalin da

52 MAMATH

53 pimamathnu
dinngamamath

54 picture (<Eng. ‘film’)
dinngarramamath

55 mamamathnu

56 MAMATH

57 mamamathnu

58 mammamath

59 MAMAWATHA

60 mamawathanu

61 ngay-dha ngatha-ka memawathadha-wa

58
mamay kardu
maminmanga ku
ma yukuwi ku maminmanga
mampurrkin nanthi
mamurt nanthi
mi
manangka
manangka thipmam
manangkaningi kardu
mani
bangkardu mani
manman ku
nanthi
mi
58-T-1 message stick
58-T-2 thunder and lightning
58-T-3 I will rectify it
58-T-4 oh, yes, it is a black cormorant
58-T-5 didgeridoo (musical instrument)
58-T-6 butterfly
58-T-7 fruit from butterfly tree
58-T-8 they (du, f) married
58-T-9 edible fruit from Morinda citrifolia
58-T-10 he is lamenting for another man
58-T-11 season — end of the wet season
58-T-12 I will move straight through the middle
58-T-13 many people had filled up the place instead
58-T-14 not black
58-T-15 the lightning will flash
58-T-16 water lily
58-T-17 young child
58-T-18 and the few men were amazed at all those fish
58-T-19 they (du, m) will face/oppose each other
58-T-20 I can have a look
58-T-21 I told him off
58-T-22 women’s dance
58-T-23 season — new leaves appear
58-T-24 Hey! (It is) a wedge shell
58-T-25 small wallaby (a wallaby is like a kangaroo, but smaller)
58-T-26 chest (body part)
58-T-27 I will be upset
58-T-28 I have hunger pains
58-T-29 particle that indicates ability to do something
58-T-30 I amazed him
58-T-31 black stingray (fish)
58-T-32 he is upset
58-T-33 Morinda citrifolia (tree)
58-T-34 black cormorant (bird)
58-T-35 crab legs
58-T-36 the lightning flashed at me
58-T-37 edible fruit from nanthi thay malangan
58-T-38 I will have hunger pains
58-T-39 unmarried man
58-T-40 they (du, m) faced each other
58-T-41 he was collecting money from them
58-T-42 unmarried woman
58-T-43 he was washed ashore
58-T-44 I continually reprove him
58-T-45 I will flash it (operate the projector)
58-T-46 left-overs
58-T-47 wedge shell (mollusc)
58-T-48 I collected them from him
58-T-49 butterfly tree
58-T-50 not
58-T-51 if it had been me, I would have rectified it
58-T-52 praying mantis (insect)
58-T-53 baby girl
58-T-54 they (du, f) will marry
58-T-55 How many praying mantises did you sg see?
58-T-56 heart
58-T-57 fruit tree
58-T-58 saver, hoarder
58-T-59 the picture (movie) flashed at us (we saw the picture)
58-T-60 he will be washed ashore
58-T-61 I flashed it (operated the projector)
58-T-62 I will amaze you sg
58-T-63 to be upset, to be troubled
58-T-64 to have hunger pains
58-T-65 to be amazed, to marvel
58-T-66 to collect from another
58-T-67 to marry [lit. to put a finger into (a ring)]
58-T-68 to fill up with people (only)
58-T-69 to rectify
58-T-70 to flash (used of operating a projector)
58-T-71 to be opposite, to face
58-T-72 to wash ashore
58-T-73 to move straight through the middle; to tell another off, to reprove
58-T-74 to amaze another
58-T-75 [verb for] lightning flash
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mother with first-born child
he took it from me
I didn't understand you
he continually chooses one item
father’s mother; father’s mother’s sister(s)
I will choose it
thumb, big hand
here now
season — showers of rain in the cold season; also eucalyptus flower
time
like this
spider
fruit tree
small pied goose (bird)
catfish (fish)
wooden hammer made from thay maran, used for breaking open mi lala
I will singe the pied geese
I forget: maybe [it was] a pied stilt, maybe a catfish, maybe a perch
like, similar
pied stilt (bird)
sky
by myself [lit. my hand]
I will trust myself
don’t you continually disturb me
he always carries the wallaby over his shoulder
like, similar
we always help each other
he continually trusts me
I will carry it over my shoulder
you took it from him
like this
new spear
tree, used for making wooden hammers and dugout canoes
fingers
new, now
an action
I continually understand
a good action
cold rain—in dry season
I will help myself
perch (fish)
hand
wild grape
edible fruit from nanthi thay marrar
five
sign language
I understood him
I carried it over my shoulder
bush potato
I am going by myself
they were continually disturbing me
to learn by observation
to trust
to help oneself
to carry over one’s shoulder
to trust oneself
to choose, to select (one item)
to understand
to take from another
to disturb from rest/sleep
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<td>ku were panngimathak</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>MATHBATH</td>
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<td>mere the mabath</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>memathbathnu tharra</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>merrk nanthi</td>
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<td>memmathbath ngurran</td>
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<td>-mawu</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>ku</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Darwinmawu</td>
<td>41</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Kangkarlmawu</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>METHARDAY</td>
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<td>MAYEPUP</td>
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<td>panngankumethardaynintha</td>
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<tr>
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<td>mayi ku/kardu</td>
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<td>me thingin nanthi</td>
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<td>mayirdarri ku/kardu</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>ni</td>
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<td>me nanthi</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>mikmunurr kardu</td>
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<td>medeyi ngem</td>
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<td>kardu palngun mikmunurr</td>
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<td>kardu nugarn mikmunurr</td>
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<td>MEKAT</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>milinthath ku</td>
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<td>bangamngimekat</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>bangamdutngurran ku</td>
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<td>bengimerrarrdha tharra</td>
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<td>milinthath warda</td>
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<td>MEKAT</td>
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<td>ngumekatnu</td>
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<td>ku ngurlmirl panmerrarr wurran</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>merl ku</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>milu ku</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>MERLMERL</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>mimpi nanthi</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>mamngimerlerl dim</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>mirnarrthi kardu</td>
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<td>kardu ngardardama</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>me ngala nanthi</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
60-T-1 I tripped you
60-T-2 verb negator
60-T-3 I had a dog with me
60-T-4 the One who abides above
60-T-5 one month
60-T-6 suffix to abide, to reside
60-T-7 I don’t know
60-T-8 grass whistling duck (bird)
60-T-9 toenail
60-T-10 big toe, big foot
60-T-11 sandfly (insect)
60-T-12 dragon-fly (insect)
60-T-13 non-conjugated verb: to be hungry
60-T-14 then I chanced on a sea snake as I went along
60-T-15 widow or widower
60-T-16 full moon
60-T-17 I heard (the story) from him
60-T-18 I will take everything
60-T-19 fever
60-T-20 orphan (or child with just one parent)
60-T-21 moon
60-T-22 I will carry it
60-T-23 one who resides in Darwin
60-T-24 ankle
60-T-25 I will have things with me
60-T-26 I was continually tripping
60-T-27 sea snake
60-T-28 pearly nautilus shell (a nautilus is a type of mollusc)
60-T-29 murderess: actually refers to a woman who by her interaction with several men causes jealousy, and thereby they kill each other off for that woman sickness, illness
60-T-30 I am exhausted
60-T-31 I am carrying it
60-T-33 widow
60-T-34 I am hungry [lit. I’m sitting with hunger]
60-T-35 person with sore ankle(s)
60-T-36 murderer
60-T-37 necklace [< Eng. necklace]
60-T-38 the wave(s) knocked us off our feet
60-T-39 seaweed
60-T-40 he always takes all the fish
60-T-41 foot/feet, track
60-T-42 I tripped him
60-T-43 widower
60-T-44 toes
60-T-45 I tripped/stumbled
60-T-46 to take all
60-T-47 to have with one (things, animals, people)
60-T-48 to be knocked off one’s feet (by waves or strong current)
60-T-49 to be exhausted
60-T-50 to carry a stretcher, etc.
60-T-51 to hear (the story) from another
60-T-52 to trip another
60-T-53 to trip, to stumble

60-T-54 ***
MINMINKA

mirnka   nanthi
mirntal  ku
mira     ku
mira     ku
mirrangan da
mirringi kardu (wakal)
mirrmilanithi   ku
MIRRMIRR
mirmirmirrmam
MIT
mirturl   kura
miyernu  nanthi
murdak   nanthi
mugarurr mi
mukmuk   nanthi
muluntsuk nanthi
murlak
mune     da
murntak

mirnka nguritharramenu
ku mira detj ngamam
ku mira detj ngamam
dimmirmirr
dinimirmirrdha
nanthi ngirramitnu
nanthi ngirranganmit ngem
nanthi ngirramitnu
nanthi ngirranganmit ngem
kura murlak
ku pangkuy murlak
kardu murlak
kura murlak
kardu murlak

murr
murrikin kardu
murr
murrikin kardu
murr
murrikin kardu
murr
murrikin kardu
33 nanthi
34 muru
35 murr
36 murrikin
37 murrinh
38 murrinh mamay
39 murrinh thelerrdhe
40 nanthi
41 ku
42 ku
43 ku
44 MURRK
45 ku ngurlmirl kanammurrr
46 MURRK
47 pirramurrrknu
48 pardinmrktha
49 murrwurl
50 MURRUWURL
51 mardarrimurrwuurlnu
52 murruwurlhay kardu
the thunder is rumbling

she will dance

he habitually eats fish

I will speed up the clapsticks

feather(s)

old

I will keep the thing for myself

thick (blanket, etc.)

coolibah tree

the thunder was rumbling

he hit the bird

dangerous snake

I squashed the lice eggs

clapping sticks (used for creating rhythm by clapping the sticks together), firing sticks (used for lighting a fire)

correct, pleasant

I am keeping the thing for myself

brackish water

ornament worn in hair for dancing (made from feathers)

good storyteller [lit. beautiful mouth]

flock pigeon (bird)

baby girl

I will beautify the top/back of it

alcohol

bird

water lily

dangerous, nasty, cheeky

speech, language, name(s), places associated with talking or learning, non-Aboriginal songs, stories, legends, news

grevillea (plant)

old time, long ago, before, etc.

brains

bone

nasty person

snake

purple shell (mollusc)
a quiet person (i.e. doesn’t talk much)
bony, skinny, lean

season — dry/cold

bitter yam

water lily

tail

news

old thing

lice eggs

they were dancing

children’s talk

to keep something for oneself

to dance, women only
to beautify

[verb for] thunder rumbling
to eat (more than one thing, or habitually)
to blink one’s eye