

The published phylogenies of the Pama–Nyungan family of Australian languages have been based on basic vocabulary data (though Schmidt (1912) also drew on other considerations (Koch 2004)). These have most of their subgroupings in common, so the points of difference are easy to focus on. One most apparent is on the mid-southern edge of the continent, where the adjacent Mirniny and Wirangu languages have been related more or less distantly. The proposed smallest grouping encompassing these two languages has appeared relatively high in classifications. In order of proposal, it has been the Mittel-Sprachen of the Süd-west-gruppe (Schmidt 1912), the broader Nyungic group (O’Grady, Wurm & Hale 1966), the top level Pama–Nyungan itself (Bowern & Atkinson 2012), or a clade (broader than Nyungic) including Western, Arandic, and Thura–Yura (Bouckaert, Bowern & Atkinson 2018:(h-p)). (Aside: Dixon 2002:xxxvii had Wirangu as an isolate.) Thus the common vocabulary between Mirniny and Wirangu would have two components: a common inheritance from much earlier times, and loans from relatively recent contact (whether with each other or the WD Language). O’Grady & Klokeid (1969:309) reported a surprisingly high 33% common vocabulary (on a 100-item list; perhaps with some undetected loans); the cognates identified by Bowern (2018) are 19% (of 160 items of basic vocabulary). My presentation about the particular common vocabulary, drawing also on Simpson & Hercus (2004), thereby scrutinises the methodologies behind the above proposals; and, as a consequence, the prehistoric movements inferred by Bouckaert et al. (2018) which (on their analysis) brought the separate lineages of Mirniny and Wirangu back into contact.

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