construction, where both clauses are marked with -da, the meaning appears to be:

\[ X \ V_1\text{-}da, \ Y \ V_2\text{-}da \]
if X does \( V_1 \), Y will do \( V_2 \)

This explication might also need to allow for the possibility of one or both clauses referring to something that happens, rather than something that an agent (X or Y) does. This could be shown as follows:

\[(X) \ V_1\text{-}da, (Y) \ V_2\text{-}da\]
if X does \( V_1 \) / if \( V_1 \) happens
Y will do \( V_2 \) / \( V_2 \) will happen

The one-clause construction, in which the -da clause entails not a second clause but an assumption that 'this would be good', would be shown as follows:

\[(X) \ V\text{-}da\]
if X does \( V \) / if \( V \) happens
this would be good

These explications display the exact nature of the relationship being proposed between the meaning of -da in the one-clause construction type, where its meaning has been described as desiderative, and the two-clause construction type, where its meaning has been described as hypothetical. Both construction types have the same first component, a hypothetical proposition ('if X does \( V \) / if \( V \) happens'). They both have a second component which is conditional upon the first. The only difference is that in the two-clause construction this component is specified by the second clause, while in the one-clause construction it is always 'this would be good'.

It can be noted in passing that there is an interesting parallel between this view of Kayardild -da, and the English word if. In English, if usually occurs in two-clause constructions, as in the glosses for examples (7) and (8) above. But if can also occur in the if only construction, where a second clause may be implied but need not be present. For example, a sentence like If only they'd answer the phone! can occur with or without a
second clause (such as *I could tell them the good news*). The *if only* clause may refer to a specific outcome, but if no second clause is present, the one-clause construction may imply only ‘if they’d answer the phone, this would be good’. It cannot be interpreted as implying that something bad would happen.

There is some additional supporting evidence for the idea that the meaning of *-da* is more to do with ‘if’ than with wanting. First, there is its behaviour in questions like the following:

(11)  *Ngada wirrka-da?*

    IsNOM  dance-DES

    ‘Should I dance?’

If *-da* refers to wanting, then a question like this should be able to be interpreted as an inquiry about what the addressee wants (‘do you want me to dance?’), or at the very least, about what someone wants (‘does somebody/anybody want me to dance?’). But only the ‘potential’ inflection is interpreted this way in a question (*Ngada wirrka-ju? ‘Shall I dance?’*), and *-da* is interpreted as being much more vague, as if the speaker were wondering aloud to herself (‘I wonder if I should dance?’ or ‘would it be good if I dance?’).

The second piece of evidence concerns the use of *-da* in subordinate clauses. It is used in indirect jussives, as shown in (5) and (6) above, where it seems to refer to someone’s wanting someone else to do something. But it does not occur in other types of subordinate clauses that express wanting, for example in purposive clauses, where the ‘potential’ inflection is used (see next chapter). In the indirect jussives, the main clause always contains either an imperative, or a speech act verb denoting a request. In other words, the meaning of wanting is always present in the main clause, whether encoded in an imperative (‘I want you to do something’) or a request verb, whose meaning involves someone’s wanting someone to do something. So, the subordinate clause, with *-da*, need not necessarily be interpreted as referring to wanting, since this meaning is already present in the main clause.

More evidence is needed about the subordinate clause use of *-da*, but it looks as if it can only take a desiderative reading (as opposed to a hypothetical one) in an environment where the main clause refers to wanting. This contrasts with the ‘potential’ inflection, discussed in the
next chapter, which seems to mark a subordinate clause as wanted regardless of the content of the main clause.

A possible argument against viewing the meaning of -da as hypothetical or conditional, is its association with emotive modal case, as mentioned above. The emotive marker -inja seems to make some reference to feeling: an analysis of its meaning is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but it may mean something like ‘someone could feel something about this’. It occurs only with desideratives, apprehensives (where someone wants to avoid something, and may very likely feel something about that), and hortatives (where someone wants someone else to do something, and again probably feels something about this). Hypotheticals and conditionals, on the other hand, can be entirely neutral with regard to feeling. However, -inja does not have to occur with -da, and it is interesting to note that it does not occur in the neutral conditional context of example (8) above. Many uses of -da are compatible with a reference to feeling, but this does not mean that feeling or wanting are necessarily part of the meaning of -da.

The discussion so far has proposed explications of the meanings of two construction types in which -da occurs, and has argued that the two seemingly different functions of -da, desiderative and hypothetical, can be understood as related according to the analysis proposed. It might well be asked at this point, how many meanings are there? Are there two separate but related meanings belonging to the two different construction types, or can they be reduced to a single meaning for the single form -da?

At first, it looked as if -da presented a fairly clear case of polysemy justified on purely syntactic grounds: the one-clause construction with a desiderative meaning, probably related to the concept of wanting; and the two-clause construction with a hypothetical or conditional meaning. The two-clause construction seems unambiguous, but the one-clause construction at first appeared to be ambiguous between wanting and some more vague or general desirability.

A considerable depth of analysis was needed in order to come up with a plausible solution to the ambiguity problem, in the form of an analysis of the seemingly ambiguous one-clause construction in terms of possible good (‘if this happens, it would be good’) rather than in terms of wanting. Only then was it possible to see the link between this construction type and the two-clause ‘if...then’ construction.
This analysis led to the proposal of two explications, one for each construction type, and these explications made it possible to compare the meanings, component by component, seeing exactly where and how they differ.

The NSM method takes the utterance, not the individual lexeme, as the basic unit of meaning to be analysed. This principle is especially appropriate in the case of grammemes, since there are almost no conceivable circumstances in which a Kayardild speaker would say just -da. This grammeme must always occur in some construction or other. And each construction type has a meaning of its own, that interacts with but is not wholly determined by the meaning of the grammeme.

If the two construction types had completely different meanings, with no or very few shared components, then one could certainly say that -da had two separate meanings. But the two construction types examined here have a very high proportion of their meaning in common. The only difference between them seems to be that the absence of a second clause denoting a dependent event triggers a kind of default meaning, 'this would be good'. This meaning difference seems to be entirely due to the construction itself, that is to the presence or absence of a second clause, rather than to anything about -da.

It still has to be recognised that -da occurs in two different construction types and that these do have two different meanings. Reducing them to one would give a formula that would be too general to be fully predictive. The two-clause construction definitely cannot be analysed in terms of two one-clause constructions. However, the meanings of construction types are complex, while the meaning of an individual lexeme or grammeme may be simple, and in some cases, irreducible.

In this sense it may be possible to reduce the two functions of -da to a single meaning: the proposed primitive IF. Like words and morphemes in natural languages, the NSM primitives also occur in particular combinations. Although the combinatorial properties and 'primitive syntax' of IF require a great deal of further research, it seems that IF signals both the presence of two propositions and the nature of the relationship between them. This could explain why, if a second proposition is not present in an IF utterance (as in the one-clause -da construction or the English if only construction), some kind of default proposition is read into
the meaning. The details of how this works would be a fruitful subject for investigation.

A tentative conclusion can be drawn at this point, that -da has a single meaning, identifiable with NSM IF, and that it functions in two different construction types, each with its own specific meaning, but sharing the core meaning of IF.

There needs to be some further investigation in Kayardild of the translatability of the explications proposed above. There are several possible 'if...then' constructions involving sequences of tense and mood in the two clauses. But none of these sequences seems to involve any lexical equivalent of IF, and it is possible that these other constructions could be explicited in terms of -da in the two-clause construction. If -da is the Kayardild equivalent of IF, then it should be indefinable, and hence the explication 'if X does V1, Y does V2' would only be translatable via -da itself: X V1-da, Y V2-da. The one-clause construction should be translatable via a -da clause plus a second clause with mirraa 'good', though this should be tested with speakers of the language.

It will be seen from the above analysis that the -da inflection is certainly not semantically empty; that it has a meaning or meanings that can be discovered and stated by means of a thorough semantic investigation. A considerable depth of analysis is required to arrive at a plausible solution, which is open to further testing and verification or falsification. The result of this kind of analysis is far from the untidy proliferation of possible meanings and potential ambiguities that would appear if unconstrained polysemy were allowed. The NSM method offers an orderly way of investigating cases of possible or likely polysemy, specifying the relationships of meanings with syntactic functions, stating explicitly the meanings of a grammeme in different construction types, and showing the relationships between those meanings.

The next case study involves more ambiguity. It examines a grammatical particle whose meaning seems to overlap partially with the meaning of a verb, but both the particle and the verb show some ambiguity. Procedures similar to those demonstrated above are used to provide a coherent analysis of how many meanings are involved.
4.3 Wanting, liking and irrealis in Buru

The Buru language of Indonesia does not have a main verb meaning ‘want’. The two words most often associated with wanting are the irrealis marker la and the nominal verb suka ‘like’. Both of these words are quite frequently translated as ‘want’, but both appear to be ambiguous between this and other meanings.

*La* is one of a set of preverbal tense, aspect and mood (TAM) markers, though it differs from other members of the set in ways that will be discussed below. It marks a clause as desired, intended, hypothetical or simply future. The following example is ambiguous between a future or intentional reading (a) and a desiderative reading (b):

(12) *Yako la iko.*

1s IRR go

a. ‘I’m going to go.’
b. ‘I want to go.’

*Suka*, which may be a loan from the Malay verb *suka* ‘like’, is also ambiguous, between a ‘like’ reading (a) and a desiderative reading (b):

(13) *Ringe nak suka la (da) kaa.*

3s 3sPOSS like IRR (3s) eat

a. ‘He likes to eat.’
b. ‘He wants to eat.’

*Suka* often takes an irrealis clausal complement, as in the above example, but can also take an object NP. In this construction (e.g. *Kam.rua nam suka saro* ‘The two of us liked each other’) the interpretation is unambiguously ‘like’, not ‘want’.

*Suka* is syntactically anomalous. It functions as a main verb in a clause, as in the two examples above, but unlike any other verb it must be preceded by a possessive pronoun. Because of this it has been termed a nominal verb. The primary meaning of *suka* seems to be ‘like’; it only indicates wanting in conjunction with an irrealis complement marked by *la*, as in (13) above. Even in this construction it is ambiguous between ‘like’ and ‘want’.
Sentences like (13) can also occur without *suka*. The following example cannot be interpreted as ‘He likes to eat’, but is still ambiguous between desire/intention and futurity, like (12) above:

(14) *Ringe la (da) kaa.*
3s IRR (3s) eat
  a. ‘He wants to eat.’
  b. ‘He’s going to eat.’

The irrealis marker *la* also has several interesting syntactic properties. It can serve either as a preverbal TAM marker, as in (12) above, or as a complementiser introducing an irrealis subordinate clause, for example:

(15) *Ringe oli la (da) kaa.*
3s return IRR (3s) eat
  ‘He went home to eat/so that he could eat.’

(16) *Ringe iko la (da) tou-k fen.lale.*
3s go IRR (3s) see-APP village.inside
  ‘He went to take a look around the village.’

If the subject of the subordinate clause is coreferential with the main clause subject, the subordinate clause subject is optional, as indicated by the brackets in the two examples above, and example (13).

*La* functions like the other TAM markers, but differs from them in two ways. First, all TAM markers precede the verb, but only *la* can be separated from the verb by a subject. Compare (14-16), where a subject pronoun can come between *la* and the verb, with the following, where nothing can come between the verb and the abilitative aspect marker *te*:

(17) *Beto-beto kami te (*ma) bage moo.*
night-RDP 1ex.p ABIL (*1p) sleep NEG
  ‘Night after night we couldn’t sleep.’

Second, only one TAM marker can occur in a clause, with the exception of *la* which can co-occur with any other TAM marker provided
the subject comes between them. In the following example la co-occurs with te:

(18) *Kami la ma te iko.
    lex.p IRR lp ABIL go
    'We want to be able to go.'

If te were absent, the coreferential subordinate subject (ma) would be optional, but here it is obligatory to separate la and te.

La is also unique among the complementisers. Besides being the only complementiser that is also a TAM marker, it is the only complementiser that can occur without a preceding main verb. Other complementisers, like the realis complementiser pa below, can take the place of la in sentences like (15) or (16) above:

(19) Ringe oli pa da kaa.
    3s return REAL 3s eat
    'He went home and ate.'

But no other complementiser can function like la in (14), without a main verb:

(20) *Ringe pa da kaa.
    3s REAL 3s eat

Thus, the grammatical status of la is somewhat anomalous. Grimes' analysis of this language shows how other TAM markers have apparently developed from main verbs, for example abilitative te from tewa 'know'. He suggests that la may have developed similarly from the verb laha 'request', which may have had an earlier meaning 'desire', and that this could account for the synchronic absence of a desiderative main verb.

The evidence indicates that wanting is involved when la is used in a subordinate clause. When the irrealis marker la introduces purpose clauses as in (15) and (16) above, the translation does not usually refer to wanting, but that is because wanting is encoded in the English purpose construction used in the gloss, as it is in the Buru purpose clause. In other subordinate clauses la can refer to someone's wanting someone else to do something, for example:
(21) Da puna ringe la da oli.
3s do 3s IRR 3s return.
‘He, made him; go home.’

(22) Sira mamhisik ringe la da wada iye-ro.
3p force 3s IRR 3s carry thing-PL
‘They forced him to carry the stuff.’

The verb mamhisik ‘force’ in (22) includes in its meaning that the agent wants the outcome. It might be inferred that in this example la does not necessarily mark the subordinate clause as wanted, since this meaning is already indicated by the semantics of the verb; so here la might be seen as a fairly empty grammatical marker introducing the clause that expresses the aim of the verb ‘force’. However puna ‘do’ in (21) does not of itself encode wanting, and so in this example it can be seen that la does carry the meaning that the subordinate clause action is wanted by the subject of the main clause (i.e. that the main clause subject wants the other person to go home).

The only case where la does not imply some specific person’s wanting something is in a rather unusual construction where a la clause is used as the subject of a non-active verbal predicate:

(23) La da iko gam pa masi di gosa.
IRR 3s go ALL down sea DISTR good
‘For her to go down to the coast is good.’

The distinction between active and non-active verbs is an important one in Buru grammar. Active verbs denote things that someone can intentionally do, while non-active verbs denote things that happen; non-active verbs cannot be used in the imperative. When a non-active verb occurs in an irrealis construction with la, a subject must come between la and the verb. In the following example with the non-active predicate haa ‘big’, la can occur with or without suka ‘like’, but the subordinate subject da is obligatory:

3s IRR big
b. *Ringe la da haa.*
   3s IRR 3s big

(c. *Ringe nak suka la da haa.*
   3s 3SPOSS like IRR 3s big

'He wants to grow.'

With active verbs, on the other hand, a coreferential subject is optional, as seen in (13-16) above.

From this it can be seen that preverbal *la* can be applied only to voluntary actions, that is to things that the subject can want to do. When *la* introduces a full clausal complement, on the other hand, the complement verb may be active or non-active. In non-active contexts like the following example, *la* can be interpreted as referring to future possibility rather than to the subject's wanting an involuntary action to happen:

(25) *Ringe la.d.ba.moho.*
   3s IRR.3s.DUR.fall

'He was having a tendency to fall.'

However, a desiderative reading cannot be excluded even in the case of non-active verbs like 'fall'. In most contexts people don't want to fall, but the *la* clause could refer to wanting to fall in a game, for example.

Following the analytical procedure suggested above, the different construction types for *la*, and the range of meanings associated with them can be identified. There are two main-clause uses of *la*. The first is where *la* immediately precedes the verb (*X la V*), and the verb must be an active verb. This construction can refer either to wanting or to a possible future action, and could be represented as follows:

\[
X \text{ la } V_{\text{[Active]}} \quad (\text{e.g. 13})
\]

a. *X wants: 'I will do V'*

b. *X can do V after now*

where (a) and (b) are the two possible readings. In (b), 'can' represents epistemic possibility, and 'after now' refers to the time of the utterance.

The second main-clause *la* construction has a second subject between *la* and the verb. Here the verb can be active or non-active, and its
subject must be coreferential with the main clause subject. This construction can also refer either to wanting or to a possible future event. The difference from the preverbal *la construction seems to be that in this construction *la introduces not a voluntary action (X does something that X wants to do) but a voluntary or involuntary event of which X is the subject.

\[ X \textit{la} X \textit{V} \text{(e.g. 24b, 25)} \]
\[ \text{a. } X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V \]
\[ \text{b. this can happen after now: } X \text{ will do } V \]

It should be asked whether the reference to future time (‘after now’) is needed in addition to the reference to epistemic possibility (‘can’) in all cases where these constructions are used. The evidence for this as a necessary component of the meaning is not overwhelming, but it appears that while sentences like (24b) can take an alternative reading ‘He will/may \textit{grow},’ they cannot refer to possibility in the present time, *‘He may be big (now).’*

Before exploring the relationship between the (a) and (b) meanings, we turn to the uses of *la* in subordinate clauses, where it seems to refer more unambiguously to wanting. There are two common subordinate clause *la* constructions, one where *la* immediately precedes the subordinate verb, and one where the subordinate clause subject comes between *la* and the verb. Each of these constructions seems to have only one possible meaning. The first is the purpose construction, where the second verb expresses the purpose of the main verb action, and the same entity (X) must be the subject of both verbs:

\[ X \textit{V}_1 \textit{la} V_2 \text{(e.g. 15, 16)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants: ‘I will do } V_2’ \]
\[ \text{because of this } X \text{ does } V_1 \]

In the second subordinate clause construction, the subordinate clause subject may or may not be the same entity as the main subject. Here, as in the *X la X V* construction, *la* is not directly introducing an action, but introduces an event:
4.3 Wanting, liking and irrealis

\[ X V_1 \text{ la } X/Y V_2 \text{ (e.g. 21, 22)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V_2 \]

because of this \( X \) does \( V_1 \)

This appears to be the only construction in which the subject of the event that \( X \) wants can be someone other than the ‘wanter’.

Recall now the construction where \textit{suka} ‘like’ takes a \textit{la} complement, as in (13) above. This construction is similar in form to the two subordinate clauses explicated above, with one important exception: the subordinate clause event cannot be the purpose of the main clause event, liking. These two \textit{suka la} constructions, one with \textit{la} introducing a verb, and one with \textit{la} introducing a clause, can be explicated along the same lines as the two constructions shown above, but without the second, ‘because’ component:

\[ X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka la } V \text{ (e.g. 13)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants: ‘I will do } V’ \]

(*because of this \( X \ \text{POSS } \textit{suka} \))

\[ X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka la } X V \text{ (e.g. 13)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V \]

(*because of this \( X \ \text{POSS } \textit{suka} \))

The effect of this is that the \textit{suka la} constructions seem to mean much the same as the (a) readings of the \( X \ la \ V \) and \( X \ la \ X \ V \) constructions discussed above.

However, \textit{suka} is certainly not semantically empty, and the \textit{suka la} constructions also seem to be ambiguous, as seen in (13) above, between wanting and liking. A closer examination of the meaning of \textit{suka} is needed in order to discover the nature of its relationship with the desiderative meaning in the \textit{suka la} constructions. First let us examine the unambiguous \textit{suka} construction mentioned above, where \( X \ \text{POSS } \textit{suka} \ Y \) cannot be interpreted as ‘\( X \) wants \( Y \)’ but only as ‘\( X \) likes \( Y \)’. This ‘liking’ involves the experiencer’s feeling something good in relation to the entity or event that is the object of liking. If the object of liking is an entity, Buru uses the \( X \ \text{POSS } \textit{suka} \ Y \) construction, while if what is liked is an event or action, a \textit{suka la } V \) construction is used.
When an entity is the object of *suka*, the relationship of that entity (Y) to the 'good feelings' of the experiencer (X) implies that these feelings arise from X's conscious awareness of Y. That is, when X thinks of Y, then X feels something good. These two proposed components are linked in a causal relationship, because the good feelings arise not just along with thinking of Y, but because of it. While a fuller investigation of the meaning of *suka* in Buru might reveal one or more additional elements, the meaning of this construction is something like this:

\[ X \text{ POSS } suka \ Y \]

when X thinks about Y, X feels something good because of this

The 'like' sense of the *suka la* constructions could then be explicated along similar lines:

\[ X \text{ POSS } suka \ la \ V \]

when X thinks about this: 'I will do V',

X feels something good because of this

\[ X \text{ POSS } suka \ la \ X \ V \]

when X thinks about this: X will do V,

X feels something good because of this

At this point a possible link between the two readings of the *suka la* constructions begins to emerge. In the *X POSS suka Y* construction, where *la* is not present, *suka* refers unambiguously to liking. Therefore it is possible that the reference to wanting in the *suka la* constructions comes not from the meaning of *suka* but from the meaning of *la*.

Recall now the subordinate clause constructions in which *la* indicates that the subordinate clause event (*la V2 or la X V2*) is wanted by the main clause subject, and consider the possibility that the *la* clause in the *suka la* construction means the same: that the subordinate clause event is wanted by the subject of the main, *suka* clause. Such a meaning (X wants: X will do V) is fully compatible with the 'liking' scenario where if X does V then X has good feelings because of it. Indeed, this scenario may arise because of X's wanting. This would mean that the *suka la* constructions could be explicated identically with the other subordinate
clause la constructions shown above, with the meaning of the main clause $X \text{ POSS suka}$ corresponding to the ‘$X$ does $V_1$’ component:

$$X \text{ $V_1[=\text{POSS suka}]$ la } V_2$$
X wants: ‘I will do $V_2$’
because of this $X$ does $V_1[=\text{feels something good}]$

$$X \text{ $V_1[=\text{POSS suka}]$ la } X \text{ $V_2$}$$
X wants: $X$ will do $V_2$
because of this $X$ does $V_1[=\text{feels something good}]$

Because of the many steps required to arrive at this analysis, it may at first seem a trifle far-fetched and speculative. However, it must be evaluated on the same criteria that are applied to any other aspect of linguistic description: consistency, economy, explanatory and predictive power.

On these criteria the proposed analysis shapes up quite promisingly. It is internally consistent and accounts for all the observed data. It is optimally economical: not only does it allow the $suka \text{ la}$ constructions to be explicated in exactly the same way as the other subordinate clause $la$ constructions, but in doing so it resolves the apparent ambiguity of the $suka \text{ la}$ constructions. The explications proposed above contain both a desiderative component contributed by the subordinate $la$ clause and a ‘liking’ component contributed by $suka$ in the main clause. This proposal has the power to explain why examples like (13) above seem to be ambiguous: if a $suka \text{ la}$ construction encompasses both liking and wanting in its meaning, then (13) is not ambiguous but includes both the (a) and (b) glosses. English has no similar construction that combines the two concepts, so the English gloss for the Buru sentence would have to remain something like ‘He wants/likes to eat’.

The proposed analysis also predicts that the $X \text{ POSS suka } Y$ construction, without a $la$ clause to contribute wanting to the meaning, would refer unambiguously to liking; and it predicts that $la$ constructions without $suka$ would not refer to liking. A further prediction was that the $suka \text{ la } X \text{ $V_2$}$ construction should be able to take a non-coreferential subordinate subject just as the $X \text{ $V_1$ la } X/Y \text{ $V_2$}$ construction can, and this was later found to be true in examples like the following:
(26) *Nin suka la nin ana-t oli.*

3pPOSS like IRR 3pPOSS child-NOM return

'They wanted their daughter to return.'

Hence the second *suka la* construction shown above should really be headed: \( X V_1[=POSS \ suka] \ la \ X/Y \ V_2. \)

Having found a possible resolution for the seeming ambiguity of *suka*, we return now to the other case of apparent ambiguity, the main-clause *la* that seems to refer to either wanted or possible future events. The question is whether the Buru main-clause *la* is really polysemous, with two discrete and specifiable meanings, or whether the apparently different readings can be resolved into a single meaning. Recall that in examples like (12) above the possible readings of \( X \ la \ V \) are:

a. \( X \) can do \( V \) after now

b. \( X \) wants: \( X \) will do \( V \)

The (a) sense is sometimes translated as a future tense expression, ‘\( X \) will do \( V \)’ or ‘\( X \) is going to do \( V \)’, but it is a true irrealis rather than a future tense, in that it always marks the event status as uncertain; it does not convey any certainty that the event will happen after now.

Evidence has already been seen that in some syntactic contexts, namely the subordinate clause constructions, the only reading of \( la \ (X) \ V \) is that the event (\( X \) will do \( V \)) is wanted. The purpose clause ‘to eat’ in (15) does not carry an implication that the event is possible (cf. realis *pa* in 19). Example (15) is fully compatible with a context where the subject went home to eat but couldn’t because there was no food there. This evidence indicates that a desiderative meaning of *la* can be established as separate from the sense of epistemic possibility.

Example (18) above shows that *la* in a main clause can also appear in a context that strongly favours the desiderative reading. From the ambiguity described for (12) and (14), one might expect (18) to be ambiguous between ‘We want to go’ and ‘We’ll be able to go’ or ‘We might be able to go’, but this is not so. The interaction between the semantics of *la* and the other TAM markers is worthy of more study, but for the present this can be noted as another context that seems to distinguish ‘want’ from ‘can’ as a meaning of *la*. 
One syntactic context in which la cannot be interpreted as 'want' was seen in (23) above. While little information is available on this construction type, a preliminary representation can be sketched as follows. It is more than an 'if...then' construction in that it does seem to carry the implication that the la clause is possible, and the first component is intended to reflect this.

\[
l a \ X \ V \ g o s a \quad (e.g. \ 23)
\]

this can happen: X will do V
if it happens, it will be good

A feature of this construction type that sets it apart from all other la constructions is that there is no main-clause subject other than the la clause itself. That is, there is no possible 'wanter' in this construction; whereas in all the constructions where la can mean 'want', the wanter is the main-clause subject. This is also quite different from the Kayardild 'if...good' construction (X) V-da discussed in 4.2 above, where a main-clause subject (X) can be present without necessarily being the wanter.

In this construction, the 'can' component appears to be contributed directly by la, marking the event X V as something that can happen, in the same way as it does in the (b) reading of the X la X V construction (this can happen after now: X will do V). The 'if' component, on the other hand, seems to arise from the construction itself, as a 'relational proposition' of the kind identified by Mann and Thompson, linking the possible event with 'good'. Therefore the presence of an 'if' component in this construction type should not necessarily be taken as indicating that 'if' is a possible meaning of la. Buru has other, much more productive, 'if...then' constructions, as well as a propositional marker mambole 'good if'.

4.4 Polysemy and disambiguation

The evidence examined above shows that there are syntactic contexts in which la refers to wanting but not possibility, and other syntactic contexts where it refers to possibility but not wanting. This provides a sound empirical basis for saying that la in main clauses may really be polysemous between 'want' and 'can'.
However, the syntactic evidence does not allow us to establish two separate meanings entirely distinguishable by their syntactic behaviour, as was possible with the Kayardild -da in its one-clause and the two-clause constructions. For Buru la, only some syntactic constructions provide a basis for distinguishing between the two meanings under consideration: the subordinate clause la constructions are associated with wanting, and the la X V gosa construction with possibility, but the main-clause X la V and X la X V constructions can be associated with either wanting or possibility.

The interaction of la with the verb type is relevant here. Recall that X la V requires an active verb, while in X la X V the verb may be active or non-active. These two verb types are formally distinguished on the basis of their syntactic behaviour, and according to Grimes' thorough description of them, the semantic basis of this distinction is something like this:

Active verb
someone does this
because this person wants it

Non-active verb
this happens / someone does this
(not because someone wants it)

The second component for the non-active class is shown in brackets because the semantic contrast between the two classes is probably not fully symmetrical. The fact that volition (wanting) seems to be involved in one class does not imply that the exact opposite necessarily characterises the other class. Like many Austronesian languages, Buru has a special verbal prefix that can add the specifically volitional meaning 'not because someone wants it' to a verb.

These class meanings indicate how the verbs in each group are thought of, but they do not affect the meanings of individual member verbs. Active verbs do not all have a component of their meaning 'someone does this because this person wants it', and non-active verbs do not all have a component 'not because someone wants it'.

Verb class meanings do not dictate the meanings of construction types either. Although it seems tempting to interpret the requirement for an active verb in the X la V construction as evidence that wanting is more
central to the meaning of this construction than to the meaning of $X \text{ la } X V$, the fact remains that both constructions are ambiguous, as shown by examples like (14). So, an attempt to distinguish the two meanings entirely on syntactic grounds by identifying $X \text{ la } V$ only with 'want' and $X \text{ la } X V$ only with 'can' is not sustainable in the light of the facts.

That said, however, the interaction of verb type with construction type can have the effect of making one of the two readings more likely, and in a sense less marked, than the other. The most common reading of $X \text{ la } V_{[Active]}$ is 'X wants: I will do V'. The construction is still ambiguous, and can refer to possibility, but the effect of the verb type is to make the desiderative reading the preferred one.

In the $X \text{ la } X V$ construction, on the other hand, the full clausal complement of la presents the event ($X \text{ will do } V$) as happening (this can/will happen), whether the verb is active or non-active. The effect of this is to make the 'can' reading slightly more likely than the 'want' reading, as seen with example (25). Again the construction remains ambiguous, allowing of either reading, but the 'can' reading is slightly more favoured by the construction type.

An active verb can neutralise this effect, so that the 'want' reading is more likely in (12) than in (25), but it would probably be accurate to represent the order of preference of meanings in the two constructions as follows:

\[
X \text{ la } V_{[Active]}
\]

a. X wants: 'I will do V'

b. X can do V after now

\[
X \text{ la } X V
\]

a. this can happen after now: X will do V

b. X wants: X will do V

But the relationship between the (a) and (b) meanings seems intuitively close, close enough that one can imagine them as being somehow involved in a single meaning associated with the single form la. After all, we know that when someone (X) wants to do something (V), it is usually something that can happen after this time. Of course this need not always be so; one can want something that may or may not turn out to be possible, and example (18) seems to provide such an instance. Or one can
want something without reference to future possibilities. For example, *I'm here because I want to be here (now)* could be said in English in circumstances where either it won't be possible to be here ever again, or when the speaker wants to go somewhere else immediately after being here now.

Could it be that the separability of wanting from future possibility might apply to English speakers' concepts of wanting and possibility but not to Buru? Could the Buru language be reflecting a worldview in which people cannot conceive of wanting something that is completely impossible, or of wanting something other than in the future, and therefore do not distinguish between concepts of wanting and future possibility? Buru has words glossed as 'hope' and 'feeling contented', that could be used in relation to desired events with uncertain outcomes or desired events in the present, so would there really be any need to distinguish between a la₁ 'want' and a la₂ 'can'? The possibility of a combined meaning must always be considered, as seen in the case of the suka la constructions in the preceding section. Since the (a) and (b) meanings of main-clause la are not fully distinguishable on syntactic grounds alone, semantic evidence must be examined within the language to see whether or not its speakers distinguish between the two hypothesised meanings.

The Buru language has many other time expressions and constructions referring to future and possible events without any reference to anyone's wanting them; it is less rich in alternative ways of talking about wanting. An ambiguous utterance like Yako la iko (example 12) can readily be disambiguated by means of other words referring to possibility, such as the post-verbal auxiliary salak 'perhaps', and/or by time expressions like sepo fi dii 'after that', or supan 'tomorrow'. Greater certainty about a future event can be conveyed using expressions like resek 'really, truly', or iak (or musti) 'must' rather than la:

(27)  
\textit{Ringe iak oli.}  
\begin{array}{ll} 
3s & \text{must return} \\
\end{array}  
\text{He must go home.'}

Reference to immediate future time can be expressed unambiguously by means of specific temporal markers like the preverbal lambda, or anga 'immediately':
(28) *Lea lamba sogo.*  
sun ImmFUT set  
'The sun is about to set.'

(29) *Da iko anga.*  
3s go immediately  
'She’s going right away.'

The desiderative meaning can also be conveyed unambiguously, by adding *suka* to form a *suka la* construction as described above. The word *lale* 'inside' can also refer to desire:

(30) *Da tewa sir nun lale-t.*  
3s know 3p 3pPOSS inside-NOM  
He knows their desires/intentions.

*Lale*, which derives from the proto-Austronesian root *Dalem* 'inside', covers a very wide range of meanings, including the inside of a thing or place (see example 16), a period of time, or the inner nature of a person, their feelings or character. *Lale*, like *suka*, is syntactically anomalous, taking either nominal or verbal affixes, and it combines with other roots to form over a dozen emotion terms and terms denoting interpersonal relations. It appears likely that *lale* refers to feeling in general, but that in some contexts this can be interpreted as a feeling of desire.

Another area of semantic evidence is that the ambiguous *la* constructions can be used in contexts that exclude one or the other of the two readings. For example, the utterance in (12) above ('I want to go') can be said by a prisoner, where there is no possibility of doing so. Example (14) ('He wants to eat') could be said of someone in a famine-stricken area where there is nothing that can possibly be eaten.

It is not as easy to find contexts that exclude reference to wanting. In particular, it is difficult to find a construction that clearly expresses a contrast like 'I’m going to go but I don’t want to'. The reverse situation, 'I want to go but I can’t', is easily expressed by contrasting *Yako la iko* 'I want to go' with *Yako te iko moo* 'I can’t go'. While the means of contrasting 'going to V' with 'not wanting to V' is worth investigating further in Buru, the language offers several possible ways of achieving this contrast. For
example, preverbal *bara* 'don’t' might be used to contrast *la.d.barə iko* 'not want to go' with one of the future or immediate future expressions mentioned above.

The important points here are two: the Buru language clearly has available the lexical and grammatical resources to enable its speakers to distinguish between concepts of wanting and future possibility; and Buru speakers do make such distinctions in contexts where they feel a need to do so. If one still wishes to pursue the possibility that *la* in the two main-clause constructions either combines the two concepts or is somehow vague between them, the next step is to construct a trial definition that would either combine the two meanings, or be general enough to cover all possibilities.

If it is assumed that the concepts of wanting and future possibility may be inextricably linked, at least in the main-clause *la* construction, a single explication could be constructed including both, such as the following for *X la V*:

\[
\begin{align*}
X \text{ can do } V \text{ after now} \\
X \text{ wants to do it}
\end{align*}
\]

But this explication would not work, because it could not be used in all the contexts where *X la V* can be used, for example in the various cases mentioned above of people wanting to do things that are not possible.

The only alternative is to try to find a definition vague enough to cover all the possibilities, rather like the label 'irrealis'. The basis of such a definition would have to be the unrealised status of both wanted and possible future events:

\[
\begin{align*}
X \text{ didn’t do } V \text{ before now}
\end{align*}
\]

or:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{this didn’t happen before now: } X \text{ did } V
\end{align*}
\]

The problem with a definition along these lines is that it is far too general either to explain or to predict much about the uses of *la* in main clauses. It offers no explanation of why this *la* would be used in reference to wanting, or even future possibility, because there is no necessary connection
between an event's not having occurred before now, and anyone's wanting it or thinking that it may possibly happen after now. It also fails to show any connection between the meaning of main-clause *la* and the meaning of *la* in other construction types, so it comes no closer to identifying a single meaning with a single form than the two-meaning hypothesis does.

It can therefore be concluded at this stage of the analysis of Buru *la*, that *la* in the two main-clause constructions is ambiguous between the (a) and the (b) meanings as proposed above. The nature of the relationship between the (a) and the (b) meanings proposed above is not a compositional relationship: there is no overlap between the elements of meaning, other than the meanings associated with the parts of the construction itself, namely the subject (X), the verb (V), and in the case of the X *la* X V construction, the meaning 'X does V' associated with the full clausal complement. The remaining meaning elements, 'want' and 'can after now', are the two meanings proposed here for *la* itself in main clauses.

Thus it is posited that *la* has two senses, with no semantic content in common. The relationship between these two meanings, although intuitively connected, is formally non-compositional in nature, since they share no components, nor can one be defined in terms of the other. This type of polysemy is less common than the kind of polysemy where there are two or more discrete and specifiable meanings but these meanings have one or more components in common, as was the case with the two meanings of Kayardild *-da* discussed above.

It appears that *la* is the principal way of expressing wanting in Buru, but that it is not the principal way of expressing possibility ('can'), or of expressing future time. The best exponent of epistemic possibility in Buru is probably the TAM marker *te*, although this marker appears to be ambiguous between epistemic and habilitative senses (as is the English *can*). Other Buru expressions for possibility and futurity have been mentioned above. It is probable that the 'can after now' meaning proposed for *la* would be explicature in Buru using *sepo* 'after' and *te*.

If the desiderative meaning of *la* is not readily expressible in terms other than *la* itself (as in a *suka la* construction), this would be compatible with the NSM hypothesis that WANT is an undefinable, semantically primitive element. This would also account for the greater difficulty in finding alternative means of expressing 'want' as opposed to 'can' in contrasts between wanting and possibility, as mentioned above.
4.5 Linguistic description of multifunctional grammemes

The detailed case studies presented in this chapter have important implications for descriptive linguistics. While most descriptive grammars would not have the space for such a detailed analysis of every grammeme, the procedures followed here provide a set of tools that can be applied in an orderly way to the descriptive challenge of relating the functions of grammatical morphemes to their meanings.

The procedure used consisted of several different stages of analysis. First was an examination of the syntactic possibilities of the grammeme under consideration, that is, an analysis of the different construction types in which it can function, and what meaning or meanings are associated with each construction type. The second stage was the identification of unambiguous construction types, that is, of syntactic contexts in which only one possible reading of the grammeme can be applied. The meanings of these constructions were spelt out in full explications.

The third stage was to examine whether there were any remaining construction types that appeared to be genuinely ambiguous, to state the possible meanings of the ambiguous constructions, and to see how these meanings are related to the meanings established for the unambiguous constructions. The fourth stage involved an examination of language-internal semantic evidence, to see whether there are any semantic contexts in which only one possible meaning of an otherwise ambiguous construction is applicable, and to see whether the language has other means of distinguishing between the meanings hypothesised for the ambiguous constructions.

The final stage was the construction of explications, that is, explicit statements of the components of the meanings of the ambiguous constructions, to see whether they could be resolved into a single definition that would account for all instances of the grammeme's use, or whether this could only be done by an account involving more than one separate definition. This stage of the analysis also involved a consideration of how the meanings were related to one another, and how the nature of these relationships relate to the analysis as a whole.

These stages and their application in this chapter are an indication of the depth and complexity of analysis required to arrive at a consistent and sustainable explanation of all the facts about the functions and
4.5 Description of multifunctional grammemes

meanings of a grammeme. This complexity will seem alien and cumbersome to many descriptive linguists, who are more used to the traditional descriptive practice of seeking a general label, such as 'desiderative' or 'irrealis', for each distinct form, and under this label providing an enumeration of the various functions and possible interpretations of the form.

That is a necessary and valuable stage of linguistic description, and only when it is done carefully and thoroughly is one in a position to proceed to the next stages of analysis as demonstrated here. But if linguistic description stops at this point, it falls well short both of explaining why the grammeme has the functions it does, and of predicting what meanings are associated with what functions.

Some descriptive linguists feel that to proceed beyond this point is too risky for a non-native speaker, since it requires a level of interpretation of the data that goes well beyond the surface level of observation and recording. The same may of course be said of the grammatical descriptions produced by descriptive linguists, but in constructing a grammatical description one is guided by principles of consistency, economy, and the use of syntactic and other linguistic evidence to justify the proposed account.

While native speakers are far better equipped to investigate the semantics, and indeed the grammars, of their own languages than non-native speakers are, I have tried to show here that in semantic analysis one can apply the same principles of linguistic description that are used in grammatical description to ensure that the account offered is coherent and plausible. I have also sought to suggest a set of analytical procedures that can minimise the risk of unconstrained interpretation and non-native speaker bias. The application of these tools and procedures has produced a coherent and plausible description of two multifunctional grammemes that correlates functions with meanings, giving an account of how many senses, as well as how many functions, each form has.

More analyses of this kind are needed as a basis for establishing conventions for the representation of polysemous grammemes, but on the basis of the case studies explored here I would propose that the two compositionally related meanings of Kayardild -da should be presented as two meanings of one form -da 'if' (as a grammatical label, 'conditional' might be more appropriate than 'desiderative'), and that under this heading the two construction types and their meanings should be given.
For the non-compositionally related meanings of Buru la, on the other hand, I would propose that they should be represented as la₁ ‘want’ and la₂ ‘can after this time’, again showing the construction types and their meanings under each heading.

Whatever representational conventions are eventually adopted, it will be noted that an analysis as finely detailed as this would have the power to explain the functions and predict the interpretations of la in complex constructions like the following:

(31) *Kami laha la₁ du sili-h la₁ barisuk la₂ ringe kaweng*

*1ex.p ask want 3p pay-it want let 3s marry
tu ana-fina dii.*

with child-female that

'We asked that they pay it to allow him to marry that woman.'

I hope to have shown here that it is both necessary and possible in the linguistic description of grammatical morphemes to offer more than grammatical labels or generalisations about the possible relatedness of different functions of a single form. Using the analytical tools offered by the NSM approach, it is possible to specify both how many functions and how many meanings there are, to state exactly what they are, and to be much more specific about the nature of the semantic and grammatical relationships that have been so identified.

I hope also to have demonstrated the falsity of any notion that the only alternative to a ‘one form, one meaning’ model is unconstrained polysemy. The only polysemy allowed in this account is subject to rigorous criteria involving both syntactic and semantic evidence for any and all proposed meanings.
Chapter 5

Desiderative grammemes and interclausal relations

Languages that mark an event as ‘wanted’ by means of a desiderative grammeme raise important questions about how many semantic roles are necessarily involved in desiderative constructions, and how these semantic roles are handled by the syntax of particular languages. For example, in the previous chapter it was argued that the Buru construction X la V conveys either (a) ‘X wants: X [will] do V’ or (b) ‘X can do V after now’ and that la in main clauses can thus be identified with either of two meanings, (a) ‘want’ or (b) ‘can after now’. But there is an important difference in the ways the two concepts ‘want’ and ‘can’ are related to X and V of the target event, that is, to the event ‘X do V’ that is marked as ‘wanted’ or ‘possible’.

The nature of this difference is that ‘can’ here is more closely linked with the predicate (V), that is, with the possibility or otherwise of this predicate’s occurring or being done. ‘Want’, in contrast, is more closely linked with the entity (X) who experiences the wanting, in addition to X’s role as subject of the wanted event. Thus, ‘can’ may be thought of as a property of propositions (the possibility of their occurrence), while ‘want’ may be thought of as a propensity of persons. That is why the subject (X) is mentioned only once in the (b) formula above, while X appears twice in the (a) formula, in the semantic role of ‘wanter’ as well as ‘doer’ of the wanted event.

But is this really true of desiderative concepts in all languages and cultures? Could not some groups of people have a concept of ‘desirability’ as a property of predicates or propositions, instead of a concept of ‘wanting’ as a propensity of individual persons? That is, could some languages treat ‘desirability’ more like ‘possibility’, as a property attached to a single predicate with a single subject, making in effect a parallel between ‘X can do V’ and ‘X want do V’? In exploring the patterning of meanings across cultures one must strive to minimise the possibility of ethnocentric bias in interpreting linguistic data. A possible source of such bias could be to assume that desire must necessarily be attached more to persons and their individual experience than to the conceptualisation of events or propositions.
Caution is needed not only in semantic interpretation, but also in relation to grammar. In particular, one should be very careful about positing two underlying subject-like roles for a construction that has only one grammatical subject. Of course, Buru also has a two-subject construction, *X la X V*, where the first subject slot is more clearly associated with the role of ‘wanter’, and the second with the role of ‘doer’. A widely held view of such constructions is that *X la V* is simply derived from *X la X V* by the operation of a grammatical rule (‘Equi’) that deletes the coreferential subject (X). Having argued in Chapter 3 that such a model does not provide an adequate account of desiderative constructions, I am not going to appeal to it here.

Moreover, there are languages that do not have a two-subject desiderative construction of the kind that Buru has. This chapter presents a detailed case study of one such language, Kayardild, whose main means of expressing the concept of wanting is via the ‘potential’ verbal inflection -THu(ru), which also expresses a concept of possibility. In the first part of the chapter, the functions and senses of this and related constructions are explored, and the meanings of these constructions are identified according to the procedures developed in the previous chapter.

The final part of this chapter addresses in crosslinguistic perspective the questions of interclausal relations raised by languages like Kayardild, where the ‘desirability’ of an event expressed by a clause is marked by a grammeme whose scope appears to be purely clause-internal. Whether such grammemes are verbal inflections, verbal auxiliaries, or complementisers, their grammatical scope is limited to a single clause, placing them in striking contrast with independent ‘want’ lexemes, which not only allow but in many cases demand a second, complement clause. Th’s contrast has major implications both for an understanding of the concept of wanting across languages and cultures, and for the syntax of the proposed natural semantic metalanguage in the light of language-specific syntactic constraints applying within particular languages. In particular, constraints pertaining to coreferentiality between desideratives and their complements are explored in this light.
5.1 Wanting and potentiality in Kayardild

The Kayardild language, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, does not have a main verb expressing ‘want’. The ‘desiderative’ grammeme discussed in that chapter does not seem to refer specifically to wanting either. The Kayardild constructions most often glossed (in English) as referring to wanting are those with the verbal inflection -THu (¬-THuru) ‘potential’. This grammeme, along with its negative counterpart -nangku (¬-nangkuru) ‘negative potential’, has at least five major functions.

One of these functions is to mark a future or expected event:

(1) *Niya buka-thu mungkiji-wu dulk-u.*  
3sNOM die-POT own-PROP country-FUT  
‘He will die in his own country.’

(2) *Ngada ngudi-nangku wangalk-u.*  
1sNOM throw-NegPOT boomerang-FUT  
‘I won’t throw the boomerang.’

The object of a -THu-marked verb takes a modal case marker, ‘future’ if the event is projected, as in the examples above, and ‘actual’ if it is instantiated as in (4) below.

Another function of -THu and -nangku is to denote ability or possibility:

(3) *Dali-j! Ngada kantharrkuru ngudi-nangku bang-a-walath-u.*  
come-IMP 1sNOM alone(NOM) throw-NegPOT turtle-lot-FUT  
‘Come! I can’t turn all these turtles over on my own.’

(4) *Ngada kurri-nangku mala-y (barrunth-y).*  
1sNOM see-NegPOT sea-ACT (yesterday-LOC)  
‘I could not see the sea (yesterday).’

In present-tense contexts like (3) the distinction between futurity and possibility is neutralised, since if someone is unable to do something then it can also be expected or predicted that they will not do it. Thus (3) is
ambiguous in that it can be interpreted as either ‘I can’t’ or ‘I won’t’.
However (4) is not ambiguous, as it refers to a past impossibility.
-THu and -nangku can express prescription and prohibition:

(5) Nyingka ngij-uru-ya barrki-juru-y.
    2sNOM  wood-FUT-CLOC chop-POT-CLOC
    ‘You should chop some wood.’

(6) Ngurruwarra-wan-da yakuri wungi-i-nangku.
    fishtrap-ORIG-NOM  fish(NOM) steal-DETR-NegPOT
    ‘Fish from fishtraps must not be stolen.’

Example (5) is an indirect command in the form of what has been termed
an ‘insubordinated’ clause, one that is marked like a subordinate clause
with a ‘complementising locative’ case marker, but there is no main clause
to which it is subordinated.
-THu and -nangku can also refer to wanting:

(7) Kunya-wunya ngad, ngada jungarra-wu yakuri-wu
    small-rdp(NOM) 1sNOM 1sNOM big-FUT  fish-FUT
diya-ju dathin-ku.
    eat-POT  that-FUT
    ‘I’ve got a lousy small one, I want to eat that big fish.’

(8) Dathin-a dangka-a maku-ya tharda-ya buru-th,
    that-NOM  man-NOM woman-ACT shoulder-ACT grasp-ACT
dathin-a maku-wa warra-nangku.
    that-NOM  woman-NOM go-NegPOT
    ‘That man is grasping the woman by the shoulder, but the woman
doesn’t want to go.’

(9) Waydbala kurri-ju...; raba-tha dathin-ki duel-i.
    whiteman(NOM) see-POT  defile-ACT that-ACT place-ACT
    ‘Some white men wanted to see (that place); they defiled that place.’

In a subordinate clause, -THu and -nangku can express the purpose
or goal of the main clause action:
(10) *Kil-da karna-ja minal-i, karn-marri-wi rajurri-ju.*
3p-NOM burn-ACT scrub-ACT grass-without-FUT walk-POT 'They are burning off the scrub, so (they) can walk around unimpeded by grass.'

(11) *Niya kamburi-j, ngada barrki-ju ngij-u.*
3sNOM say-ACT 1sNOM chop-POT wood-FUT 'He said for me to chop the wood.'

(12) *Ngada mibur-iya duura-tha niwan-ji, dan-ku dali-nangku.*
1sNOM eye-LOC poke-ACT him-ACT here-FUT come-NegPOT 'I warned (lit. eye-poked) him not to come here.'

Having such a wide range of functions, -THu often seems to be ambiguous, particularly in the absence of contextual clues that could indicate in what sense it is used. For example, the following sentence is completely ambiguous between futurity, possibility, and wanting:

(13) *Ngada wirrka-ju.*
1sNOM dance-POT
a. 'I will dance.'
b. 'I can dance.'
c. 'I want to dance.'

Examples (1-12) above are glossed according to their interpretation in the situation in which they were recorded, but some of them could also be ambiguous. (1) could also mean 'He wants to die in his own country'. (2) could mean 'not want' (like 8), or it could mean 'can't' (like 3). In the context of a projected event, the distinction between prediction, possibility and wanting is often neutralised, particularly in negative contexts: if someone cannot do or doesn't want to do something, then it can reasonably be predicted that they will not do it. The question of disambiguation will be addressed later.

Of the five functions of -THu described above, three have to do with wanting, while two apparently do not. The uses of -THu with expected or future events (examples 1-2) and in relation to ability or possibility (3-4), do not seem necessarily to imply that anyone wants the action to be done. The prescriptive use (5-6) does seem to imply wanting. In (5) the speaker
wants the addressee to chop some wood, while (6) implies that someone wants fish not to be stolen. In examples (7-9) the ‘wanter’ is clearly identifiable as the subject of the verb that carries the ‘potential’ inflection, while in (5-6) the ‘wanter’ is not the same as the subject of the action verb (stealing or chopping), but is rather the originator of the indirect imperative (5) or the prohibition (6).

In the subordinate clause use, too, -THu evidently implies wanting. The subjects of (10) are burning the scrub (because of) wanting to walk unhindered. The subject of (11) said something, wanting the speaker to chop the wood. The speaker of (12) warned the other person, wanting him not to come. This subordinate clause use may be seen as providing some indication that wanting is as much involved in the meaning of -THu as futurity or possibility are. The subordinate clause examples unambiguously convey wanting rather than futurity or possibility: for example, (11) cannot be interpreted as ‘He said I will chop the wood’ or ‘He said I can chop the wood’.

Some further evidence comes from ‘insubordinated’ clause constructions. These clauses are identical in form to subordinate clauses, in that each word in the clause carries a complementising case suffix, but the insubordinated clauses function independently of any main clause, as seen in example (5). When a ‘potential’ inflection occurs in an insubordinated clause, it refers to wanting, not to futurity or possibility:

3sCOBL leave-NgPOT-COBTL my-FUT-COBTL spear-FUT-COBTL  
‘He’d better not lose my spear/(I say that) he mustn’t lose my spear.’

This example does not mean ‘he will not’ or ‘he cannot’ lose the spear. Example (15) shows a contrast between a predictive use of -nangku (15a) and the desiderative use in the corresponding insubordinated construction (15b) where the speaker wants the addressee not to do something:

2sNOM see-NgPOT her-FUT morrow-FUT  
‘You will not see her tomorrow.’

2sNOM see-NegPOT-CLOC her-FUT-CLOC morrow-FUT-CLOC

'You’d better not see her tomorrow.'

(15b) can also appear with ‘COBL’ (complementising oblique) case marking instead of ‘CLOC’ (complementising locative), with no apparent difference in meaning. In neither case does (15b) convey ‘you will not’ or ‘you cannot’.

Example (16) is another indirect-command insubordinated clause. Constructions like (5) and (16) convey that someone wants the addressee to do something, but unlike direct imperatives, they apparently do not unambiguously identify the speaker as the ‘wanter’. Nevertheless, the meaning of -THu here is again clearly associated with wanting rather than with futurity or possibility:

(16) *Bilarri-juru-ya nguku-uru-ya jatha-maru-thuru-ya*
tip-POT-CLOC water-FUT-CLOC other-VDAT-POT-CLOC

*muri-maru-thuru-ya.*
b.shell-VDAT-POT-CLOC

'(One might say) (you) should tip the water into another baler shell.'

-THu is also used in hints phrased as insubordinated clauses. These clauses have the same form as the subordinate purpose clauses in (10-12) above, but they appear without any main clause:

(17) *Niya karna-juru-ya.*
3sNOM burn-POT-CLOC

'[Bring the green spear shaft], so [we] can temper it.'

(18) *Dathin-a yarbud thaari-juru-ya.*
that-NOM bird(NOM) bring.back-POT-CLOC

'[Eat that bird in such a way that] you can bring him back [i.e. don’t eat it all].'

The syntactic form of these sentences, namely the form of a subordinate purpose clause, invites the hearer to think of an action that would contribute to the stated purpose, and it is this that constitutes the hint.
Thus (17) literally means only ‘someone wants to temper it’ and implies ‘because of this, someone [we] want someone [you] to do something [bring the green shaft]’. Similarly (18) means ‘someone wants someone to bring that bird back’ and implies ‘because of this someone [I/we] want someone [you] to do something [eat only part of it]’.

The use of ‘can’ in the informal English glosses of (17) and (18) may provide a clue to a connection between wanting and possibility. That is, in a construction like \((X \text{ wants } Y \text{ to do } V_1) \text{ so that } X \text{ can do } V_2\), it may be that ‘can’ really refers to an underlying ‘want’: ‘\(X\) wants to do \(V_2\); because of this \(X\) wants \(Y\) to do \(V_1\)’.

5.2 Purpose constructions and wanting

Kayardild has several different ways of expressing purpose, and these constructions often express someone’s wanting to do something. A description of different types of purpose construction will be followed by a closer look at how these constructions are linked with the expression of wanting.

The first type of purpose construction is a subordinate clause expressing the purpose of the main clause action. Examples of this are (10) above and the following:

(19) \(\text{Dali-jarrma-tha ngakur-a karna-juru-y yakuri-y.}\)
    \(\text{come-CAUS-IMP 1in.d-NOM cook-POT-CLOC fish-NOM}\)
    ‘Bring the fish, so we can cook it.’

In (10) and (19) the subordinate clause verb is marked ‘with -THu, but purpose subordinate clauses can also take the ‘desiderative’ inflection -\(da\), discussed in the previous chapter:

(20) \(\text{Ngijin-maru-tha rawalan-d, ngijuwa kala-d.}\)
    \(\text{me-VDAT-IMP  b.shell-NOM 1sCOBL cut-DES}\)
    ‘Give me the baler shell, so I can cut (something) (with it).’

Purpose subordinate clauses with -\(THu\) can be either adjoined to the main clause, as in (10), or embedded within it, as in (19), but similar clauses with -\(da\) are always postposed, as in (20). Insubordinated purpose clauses
functioning as hints were also discussed above (17-18). Jussive subordinate clauses, which express the purpose or goal of a main clause speech-act verb, can also take either -THu or -da. Examples of these are (11) and (12) above, with -THu, and (5) and (6) in Chapter 4, with -da.

In purpose clauses like (19) and (20) -THu and -da seem almost interchangeable. But in the jussive subordinate clauses a clear difference in meaning is apparent: -THu identifies the ‘wanter’ as the main clause subject, while -da does not necessarily presuppose a ‘wanter’. This may be seen by comparing example (5) from Chapter 4 with example (11) above. In the former, the subordinate clause action marked with -da may be wanted by the speaker, by the addressee, or by someone else altogether. But in (11) it is unambiguously the main clause subject who wants the action marked with -THu to be carried out.

This difference could explain two apparent differences in the distribution of -THu and -da. It seems that only -da is used in imperative jussives like (5) and (6) in Chapter 4. If -THu were used in the latter it would probably be interpreted as predictive (‘Tell them the white man will heal my daddy’), but it might also be interpreted as ‘Tell them you want the white man to heal my daddy’, that is, with the ‘wanter’ identified as the subject of the imperative main clause. Only -da yields an unambiguous ‘should’ reading. The second difference can be seen in example (11) above, where -THu rather than -da marks the clause subordinated to a non-imperative jussive main clause. There are no examples of this type with -da, possibly because this would not clearly indicate that the subordinate clause action is wanted by the main clause subject and is therefore the purpose of the main clause action. That is, -da would not necessarily imply any purposive relationship between the two clauses.

It is unlikely that -da could be substituted for -THu in (10). If it were substituted for -THu in (11), the meaning would be changed, to ‘He said I should chop the wood’ and thus with -da it would no longer be clear that the main clause subject is the one who wants the subordinate clause action to be done. If it is true that a purpose clause with -THu is more tightly linked to the main clause subject than a purpose clause with -da, then this could even account for why subordinate clauses with -THu can be embedded within the main clause, while subordinate clauses with -da are only postposed.
The next type of purpose construction to be discussed is the movement purpose clause. This type of clause appears only with the verbs 'come' and 'go' (*dalija* and *warraja*), or with a NP with the verbal purposive case marker -*janiija* which implies 'go looking for'. In the following example the movement purpose clause 'spear dugong' indicates the purpose of the main verb 'go'. The movement purpose clause verb and object both take the allative inflection -*iring*- and a modal case ending controlled by the main verb inflection:

(21) Balmb-*u* ngada warra-*ju* bijarrba-*ring-ku raa-*j.iring-ku.
       morrow-FUT 1sNOM  go-POT  dugong-ALL-FUT  spear-TEMAT.ALL-FUT  
       'Tomorrow I will go to spear dugong.'

In the next example, the main clause does not have a verb, but the verbal purposive marker implies 'I came (looking) for you', and the verb 'talk' is marked with -*iring*- and the modal case ending dictated by the past tense inflection of the main clause:

(22) Ngada ngumban-*jani-jarr* kamburi-*j.iring-kina.
       1sNOM  you-VPURP-PST  talk-TEMAT.ALL-PRI  
       'I came to talk to you.'

Movement purpose clauses, unlike the other purpose clauses discussed above, cannot have an overt subject; their subject must be coreferential with the main clause subject.

Another type of purpose construction employs the verbal case markers -*janiija* 'verbal purposive' and -*mariija* 'verbal translativel'. These are probably derived from free verbs 'look for' and 'put' respectively, but function synchronically as case markers on NPs. They can convey that the subject of a sentence wants something:

(23) Ngada yakuri-*janii-ji*.
       1sNOM  fish-VPURP-ACT  
       'I want a fish (and am seeking one).'</n
(24) Ngada mani-*marii-ja*.
       1sNOM  money-VTRL-ACT  
       'I want money (and am waiting for it).'
As indicated by the glosses, -janiija implies some active effort, while -mariija is more passive, and both of these markers appear to convey more than just wanting. These verbal case markers can also mark a NP as the purpose of a main verb action:

(25) Ngambura-th, nguku-janii-j.
    dig.well-ACT water-VPURP-ACT
    'They] dug a well, trying to get water.'

(26) Dii-ja ngakul-da mani-marii-j.
    sit-ACT lin.p-NOM money-VTRL-ACT
    'We are sitting waiting for our pension cheques.'

Again, -janiija is associated with active effort, and -mariija with passive waiting. Older speakers occasionally use the oblique case for purpose NPs, but this has been replaced by the verbal purposive among younger speakers:

(27) Nyingka wanjii-ja kuru-nth!
    2sNOM go.up-IMP egg-OBL
    'You climb up for eggs!'

To what extent do these various purpose constructions involve wanting? It might be better first to examine whether any of the purpose constructions can be explained without reference to wanting. It would be possible for example (19), for instance, to be said by someone who hates cooking, does not want to do it, and only does so because of obligation or necessity. But the form of the purpose clause (regardless of the sincerity or otherwise of the speaker) nonetheless presents the reason for or purpose of the main clause action ('bring fish') as someone’s wanting to do something (cook it). The relationship between these two clauses can be represented as follows:

\[ V_1-\text{IMP} \ Y-\text{NOM} \ V_2-\text{THu-CLOC} \ (Y-\text{NOM}) \ (\text{e.g. } 19) \]
I want: X will do V_2 [cook]
because of this I want: you will do V_1 (to Y)[bring fish]
Both clauses here are finite clauses: the subordinate clause as well as the main clause could stand as a sentence on its own, except for the subordinating 'complementising locative' marker on the subordinate clause verb 'cook'. Without this subordinating marker, *ngakurra karna-juru* means simply 'we want to cook'; the 'wanter' and the 'doer' are coreferential. The main clause, *dalijarrma-tha yakuriy* 'bring-IMP fish' means 'I want: you bring fish'. The subordinating marker links the two clauses so that 'we want to cook' is identified as the purpose or reason for the imperative 'bring fish'.

The only alternative way to explain the meaning of the subordinate clause, without reference to wanting, is to try to explain it via prediction, that is, via the idea that if the addressee brings the fish, then the speaker can cook it. But this would require a considerably more complex explication, because in order to explain the connection between the cooking (*V₂*) and the bringing of fish (*V₁*), a conditional element must also be posited. This would change the representation to something like:

\[
\text{I think: if you do } V₁ \text{ [bring fish] we can do } V₂ \text{ [cook it]}
\]
\[
\text{because of this I want: you will do } V₁ \text{ [bring fish]}
\]

For the purposes of this discussion, no attempt is made to remove the reference to wanting from the explication of the imperative clause (the third line). Such an explication of the purpose clause is not absolutely ruled out, but two features weigh against it. It is overly complex, requiring a sort of foreshadowing of the imperative in the conditional segment, and it does not adequately capture the nature of the purpose relationship. Thinking that something can happen if someone does something does not necessarily lead to wanting them to do it.

In the next example, (20), the purpose clause 'I cut' is marked with *-da*, not *-THu*. There are two possible explanations of the meaning of this purpose clause. Either one assumes that in this grammatical environment at least, *-da* may refer to wanting, or one follows the explanation proposed for *X V-da* in Chapter 4, namely 'if X does V, this would be good'. The first possibility yields an explication virtually identical to that proposed for (19):

\[V₁-IMP (Y-NOM), X-COBL V₂-da\ (e.g. 20)
\]
\[
someone (X) wants: X will do V₂ [cut]
\]
\[
because of this I want: you will do V₁ (to Y) [give me shell]
The second possibility could be represented as follows:

\[ V_1 \text{-IMP (Y-NOM), X-COBL} V_2 \text{-da} \ (\text{e.g. 20}) \]

if someone (X) does \( V_2 \) [cut], this would be good
because of this I want: you will do \( V_1 \) (to Y) [give me shell]

There are several reasons for preferring this second explication over the first. It is entirely consistent with the explanation of \(-\text{da}\) developed in Chapter 4, and does not require that a new meaning be posited for \(-\text{da}\) in this syntactic context. It does not result in an inordinately complex formula, in the way that the attempt to represent \(-\text{THu}\) via ‘if’ and ‘can’ did. And an explication that is consistent with the meanings of the other \(-\text{da}\) constructions is preferable to positing complete synonymy between \(-\text{da}\) and \(-\text{THu}\) purpose clauses, particularly in view of their different syntactic behaviour, whereby a \(-\text{da}\) clause cannot be embedded like a \(-\text{THu}\) clause.

Purpose clauses with \(-\text{janiija} \) ‘verbal purposive’ also appear to involve wanting, but here the wanting relates to a thing rather than an action. Wanting a thing, for example ‘water’ in (25), implies wanting to get, find or have that thing, but ‘get’, ‘find’, ‘have’ do not appear in the construction (whereas they could appear in a subordinate clause construction: ‘They dug, so that they could get water’). Hence the explication proposed below refers only to someone ‘doing something with’ the object, rather than specifically to its being found or obtained.

\[(X) \ V-\text{ACT}, \ Y-\text{janiij-}\text{ACT} \ (\text{e.g. 25})\]
someone (X) thought this about Y [water]:

maybe I can do something with this thing

I want this

because of this, this person (X) did V [dug well]

When a purposive-marked NP appears without a main verb, it still implies (unspecified) action to this purpose; (23) could be represented as:

\[ X Y-\text{janiij-}\text{ACT} \ (\text{e.g. 23}) \]

X thinks this about Y [fish]:

maybe I can do something with this thing

I want this

because of this X does something
5.2 Purpose constructions

The 'verbal translativa', *-mariija*, seems to have a more complex meaning involving location, and may be explainable without reference to wanting. A possible explication of (26) could be:

\[ V \text{-} ACT \ X \text{-} NOM \ Y \text{-} mariij-\text{ACT} \text{ (e.g. 26)} \]

\[ X \text{ thinks this about } Y \text{ [money]}: \]
\[ \text{maybe someone will do something here with this thing} \]
\[ \text{this could be good for me} \]
\[ \text{because of this } X \text{ does } V \text{ [sitting] in this place} \]

More investigation would be needed to verify the meaning of this construction, but wanting may not be a necessary component.

From this analysis of purpose constructions, it appears that while purpose constructions with *-mariija* and probably those with *-da* can be explained without reference to wanting, it is difficult to see how purpose clauses with *-THu* or NPs with *-janiija* could be explained without involving wanting.

5.3 Modality, *-THu* and wanting

The system of modal case marking is a notable feature of Kayardild grammar, and this system interacts in important ways with the functions and senses of *-THu*. The modal case markers, already seen in several examples above, appear on most of the NPs in a clause, apart from the subject. They indicate tense and mood in agreement with the verb inflection. The verb inflections dictate modal case marking as follows:

'Actual' (ACT): etymologically derived from locative case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'actual', and sometimes 'potential' (*-THu*);

'Prior' (PRI): derived from ablative case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'past';

'Future' (FUT): derived from proprietive case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'potential';

'Emotive' (EMOT): derived from oblique case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'desiderative' (*-da*), 'apprehensive', or 'hortative'.
Thus, the modal case system distinguishes between -THu and -da, and groups the latter together with hortative and apprehensive propositions.

The apprehensive inflection -NHarra functions as a virtual antonym of -da, and can appear in main or subordinate clauses. It is often translated as ‘might’, but conveys in addition that what might happen is undesirable:

(28) *Nyingka ba-yii-nyarra kulkiji-iwa-nharr.*
    2sNOM bite-DETR-APPR shark-ViALL-APPR
    ‘You might get bitten by a shark.’ (Implied: ‘watch out’.)

This effect of marking the event as undesirable could be seen as expressing someone’s not wanting the event to happen. But -NHarra, like -da, does not point to any particular person as the one who does not want the event. A better explanation could be in terms of ‘if this happens, it would be bad’. -NHarra can be contrasted with the verb warnaja ‘not want’, which clearly identifies its subject as the ‘not-wanter’.

The hortative inflection -THinja (negative form -nanginja), on the other hand, seems clearly to express the speaker’s own wanting. It always occurs in situations where the speaker wants someone else to do something to cause something to happen:

(29) *Wakatha nguku-ntha yalawu-jinj.*
    sister(NOM) water-EMOT fetch-HORT
    ‘Sister should fetch some water.’

(30) *Murruku wuu-j, dathin-inja dangka-ntha raa-jinj!*
    woomera(NOM) give-IMP that-EMOT man-EMOT spear-HORT
    ‘Give me the woomera, let me (/so I can) spear that man!’

In (29) it substitutes for an imperative, where kinship rules prevent the speaker from addressing his sister directly. The second clause in (30) can be interpreted either as a hortative (‘let me’) or as another type of subordinate purpose clause, but one that can only appear in an imperative context, where the speaker wants someone else to do something to cause or enable the intended action. The meaning of -THinja cannot be fully explained via good and bad without reference to wanting, as -da and -NHarra can.
The following explication could account for both main and subordinate clause uses, as seen in (29) and (30):

\[(X) \ (Y-\text{EMOT}) \ V-\text{THinja} \ (\text{e.g.} \ 29, \ 30)\]

I want: $X$ will do $V$ (to $Y$) / $V$ will happen (to $Y$)
because of this I want: someone will do something

While the emotive modal case marker often appears in contexts where someone wants or doesn't want something to happen, its meaning cannot be tied exclusively to wanting. It may convey instead a more general reference to feeling or emotion, such as 'someone could feel something about this'. Alternatively, it could have more of a highlighting or attention-getting function, such as 'I want someone to know this'.

The 'emotive' marker is not used with -\text{THu} in any of its functions, and the modal case usually associated with -\text{THu} is 'future'. But -\text{THu}, unlike other verbal inflections, can take NPs with either future or actual modal case marking. \text{V.hen -THu} refers to wanted or future events, it combines with the future modal case. But when it refers to possibility in the past, it can combine with the actual modal case, as seen in example (4) above, 'I couldn't see the sea yesterday'. This example cannot be interpreted as 'I didn't want to see the sea yesterday', which would be expressed instead via the verb \text{warnaja} 'not want'. Similarly, the following example referring to possibility in the past takes -\text{THu} plus 'actual':

(31) \text{Maraka yuuma-thu barruntha-y.}
\text{CTRFCT drown-POT yesterday-ACT}
'He could have drowned yesterday (but didn't).'

The meaning 'He didn't want to drown yesterday' would again be expressed using \text{warnaja} 'not want'. -\text{THu} can refer to wanting in past time contexts, as seen in (9) above, but when it refers to wanting it combines with future modal case, not with actual. That is, the 'future' modal case marker can appear even in past contexts, where the 'potential' refers to desirability /undesirability rather than to possibility/impossibility:

(32) \text{Maraka bil-da kinaa-ju ngumbo-nju.}
\text{CTRFCT 3p-NOM tell-POT you-FUT}
'They should have told you.'
(33) *Nyingka maraka raba-nangku dathin-ku dulk-u.*

2sNOM CTRFCT tread-NegPOT that-FUT place-FUT

'You shouldn’t have set foot in that (secret) place.'

The modal case system is not directly linked with wanting, but two of the modal cases, future and emotive, can occur in contexts involving wanting, while the other two, actual and prior, cannot. This seems to arise from the fact that the future and emotive modal cases are somewhat like irrealis mood: they appear in relation to events that have not actually occurred, but are expected, imagined or desired. The actual and prior modal cases are associated with events that have occurred in the past or are occurring in the present, that is, with realised events.

The interaction between verb inflection and modal case thus permits a distinction to be made between two senses of -THu, at least with reference to past events. Possibility or impossibility is, in the case of past events, realised at the time referred to. Hence it can be indicated by ‘actual’ modal case marking with a -THu-marked verb. But a wanted event is not realised at the time referred to, and it is indicated by ‘future’ modal case marking with a -THu-marked verb, even when referring to a past time, as in (32) and (33). Of course, not all clauses have NPs that can carry modal case marking, and in such clauses there is no syntactic basis for determining whether -THu refers to possibility or to wanting.

### 5.4 Meanings of -THu (≈-THuru)

From the foregoing examination of functions of -THu, it is possible to proceed to identify the meanings associated with these functions, along the lines proposed in the previous chapter. There are contexts in which -THu is ambiguous and can be interpreted as referring to the future, to possibility, or to wanting (as in example 13). But there are other contexts where -THu refers unambiguously to wanting (examples 5, 7, 9-11, 16-19, 32-33) and some in which it refers unambiguously to possibility (example 31). This is different from the situation with -da, examined in the previous chapter, in that there were no contexts in which -da referred unambiguously to wanting.
A close examination of the facts shows that -THu is not nearly as ambiguous as it first seems to be. Of the 22 examples of 'potential' inflections in the discussion above (14 with -THu and 8 with -nangku), only 7 are ambiguous, and of these, 5 are three ways ambiguous between future, wanting, and possibility. (The 7 ambiguous ones are examples 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 15a.) The other 16 examples are unambiguous, and in most of them -THu and -nangku occur in particular syntactic constructions in which they can have only one meaning. In combination with 'actual' modal case they can only refer to possibility, not to wanting or the future (examples 4, 31). In insubordinated constructions they can only refer to wanting, not to possibility or the future (examples 5, 14, 15b, 16-18). In subordinate clauses they can only refer to wanting (examples 10-12, 19). Each of these unambiguous construction types can be given its own semantic representation.

The 'actual' construction, where the object of the verb takes 'actual' modal case marking, and -THu refers only to possibility, can be represented as follows:

(X) V-THu Y-ACT (e.g. 31)

X can do V / V can happen to Y

If a subject (X) is present, the meaning is 'X can do V', while if no subject is present, the meaning is 'V can happen'.

In the insubordinated construction, -THu refers only to wanting: the 'potential'-marked action (V) is wanted by someone. If this clause were subordinated to another clause, this someone, the 'wanter', would be the main clause subject. But with an insubordinated clause there is no main clause, and therefore the 'wanter' remains unspecified:

(X) V-THu-CLOC/CUBL e.g. 5, 16-18

someone wants: X will do V / V will happen

Often, but not always, the wanter can be assumed to be the speaker. Note the difference between -THu, which indicates the existence of a wanter even when that entity is not syntactically present in the sentence, and -da, which does not necessarily imply the existence of a wanter.

In the purpose construction, -THu refers only to wanting. The 'potential'-marked subordinate clause action (V2) is wanted by the main
clause subject (X) and is presented as the reason for X’s performing the main clause action (V₁):

\[ X \text{ } V₁ \text{, } (X)/Y \text{ } V₂-\text{THu} \text{ (e.g. 10, 11)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V₂ \]
\[ \text{because of this } X \text{ will do } V₁ \]

If the performer of the wanted action is coreferential with the main clause subject (X), a subordinate clause subject is not obligatory.

In the imperative purpose construction, the identity of the wanter of the -\text{THu}-marked action (V₂) is less clear, because the wanter is not the syntactic subject of the imperative main clause. In example (19), the main clause is (\text{nyingka}) \text{ dalijarrmatha yakuriy ‘(you) bring-IMP fish’}. While the syntactic subject of ‘bring-IMP’ is ‘you’, the meaning of the imperative construction introduces a different semantic subject: the speaker who utters the imperative. Thus, the meaning of the main clause is:

\[ (\text{nyingka}) \text{ dali-jarrma-tha yakuri-y} \]
\[ ’(you) come-CAUS-IMP fish-NOM’ \]
\[ \text{I want: you will bring fish} \]

The subordinate clause, \text{ngakurra karna-juru-y ‘we cook-POT-CLOC’,} carries the same meaning as any other -\text{THu} subordinate clause: ‘someone (=the main clause subject) wants: X will do V₂’. But in the case of an imperative main clause, the wanter pointed to by -\text{THu} is the semantic subject rather than the syntactic subject of the imperative clause. Thus \text{ngakurra karnajuruy} means not ‘someone(=you) wants: we cook’, but rather ‘someone(=I) wants: we cook’. This construction can be represented as follows:

\[ V₁-\text{IMP } X\text{-NOM } V₂-\text{THu-CLOC} \text{ (e.g. 19)} \]
\[ \text{I want: X will do V₂ / V₂ will happen} \]
\[ \text{because of this I want: you will do } V₁ \]

Similarly, the unambiguous examples of -\text{nangku}, in the actual, insubordinated, and subordinate clause constructions:
(X) V-nangku Y-ACT (e.g. 4)
X can’t do V / V can’t happen to Y

(X) V-nangku-CLOC/COBL (e.g. 14, 15b)
someone wants: X will not do V / V will not happen

X V₁, (X)/Y V₂-nangku (e.g. 12)
someone wants: X/Y will not do V₂
because of this X does V₁

These unambiguous construction types provide a basis for establishing two separate meanings of -THu: ‘can’, in the ‘actual’ construction; and ‘want’, in the subordinate and insubordinated clause constructions. This leaves only one construction type that can be ambiguous: the main clause construction X V-THu. Its negative counterpart X V-nangku (examples 2, 3, 6, 8, 15a) will be discussed below. For X V-TiTHu, three possible senses need to be considered:

a. X can do V
b. X wants: X [will] do V
c. X [will] do V after now

Two of these senses, (a) and (b), have already been established as meanings of -THu in unambiguous construction types, shown above, while the future sense (c) does not occur in any unambiguous constructions.

There are some examples of X V-THu where the semantic context produces an unambiguous interpretation. In example (7) the clause ‘I eat-POT that big fish’ is interpreted as referring to wanting because it is known from the preceding clause that the speaker is complaining of having a small fish, and therefore is not saying ‘I can’ or ‘I will eat that big fish’. In example (32) the counterfactual particle maraka conveys that the projected event did not in fact occur, and this rules out a reading of -THu as referring to the future. The presence of the ‘future’ modal case marker rules out the ‘can’ reading, which would require ‘actual’ modal case marking; compare (32) with (31). The three maraka constructions can be represented as follows:
maraka (X) V-THu Y-ACT (e.g. 31)
X can do V to Y / V can happen (/at time Y)
this didn’t happen (before now)

maraka X V-THu Y-FUT (e.g. 32)
someone wants: X will do V to Y
this didn’t happen (before now)

maraka (X) V-nangku Y-FUT (e.g. 33)
someone wants: X will not do V to Y
this didn’t happen (before now)

In the third explication, ‘this didn’t happen’ must be taken as referring to a wanted ‘non-event’: ‘X will not do V’. This double negation effect results in the explication being less clear than the others, and this difficulty may require more investigation.

While there are semantic and syntactic contexts that produce unambiguous readings of -THu as meaning either ‘can’ or ‘want’, there are no examples where -THu refers unambiguously to the future. This lack of supporting evidence for an independent meaning (c) of -THu may indicate that the future sense is associated with one of the other meanings of this grammeme, rather than being an independent meaning of -THu. The component ‘after now’, or ‘after this time’ where ‘this time’ is either a time specifically referred to (such as ‘yesterday’ in example 31) or the time of speaking, would be compatible with all instances of sense (a), resulting in a reduction of the number of proposed meanings to two:

X V-THu
a. X wants: X will do V
b. X can do V after this time

The evidence supporting a combination of the ‘can’ and ‘after this time’ senses into a single definition (b) is suggestive but not conclusive. First, the lack of evidence for an independent future sense suggests that the component ‘after this time’ may be an element of one of the other meanings rather than constituting in itself a meaning of -THu. Second, this future sense would not be compatible with all instances of the ‘want’
sense, particularly in subordinate and insubordinated clauses, but it would be compatible with all instances of the ‘can’ sense, with the single exception of the ‘actual’ construction, $X \text{ V-THu} \ Y\text{-ACT} ‘X$ can do $V$ to $Y$ / at time $Y$’. In this construction it would seem that the ‘actual’ marker excludes an ‘after this time’ component from the meaning, leaving the interpretation of -THu as simply ‘$X$ can do $V$’.

The next question that must be addressed is whether (a) and (b) are separate meanings, or whether they can be combined or encompassed in a unitary concept associated with all uses of -THu. It has been shown that -THu is not as ambiguous as it seemed to be, and that in fact there is only one construction in which it is at all ambiguous, namely the main clause construction $X \text{ V-THu}$. The existence of this particular ambiguous construction certainly does not mean that Kayardild is incapable of distinguishing possibility from wanting in main clauses. On the contrary, disambiguation strategies are readily available in the language. For example, the desiderative sense of (1) (‘he wants to die in his own country’) could be conveyed unambiguously by marking the NP ‘country’ with the verbal purposive suffix -janiija. The sense of possibility (‘he could [possibly] die in his own country’) can be conveyed unambiguously by adding the particle marrbi ‘maybe’ or the proprietive suffix -nkuru; this disambiguating strategy could also be applied to examples like 13 and 31, as shown below. For the ‘negative potential’ examples, the verb warnaja ‘not want’ can be used to disambiguate sentences like (2, 3, 6, 8, 15a), where -nangku is ambiguous between ‘can not’ and ‘not want’. In these contexts, the ‘can not’ sense can also be conveyed unambiguously, via the suffix -nginja ‘unable, in vain’.

An asymmetry is observable here between -THu and -nangku. -THu is slightly more likely to be interpreted as ‘want’ than ‘can’; while -nangku is slightly more likely to be interpreted as ‘can not’ than as ‘not want’. Moreover, this asymmetry is reflected in the means of disambiguation. ‘Not want’ can be conveyed unambiguously by using warnaja, while there does not seem to be a similarly unambiguous term for ‘can not’ as an alternative to -nangku. Conversely, ‘can’ is conveyed unambiguously by the proprietive suffix -nkuru, while there seems to be no similarly unambiguous term for ‘want’ as an alternative to -THu. In this respect, ‘want’ could be regarded as the more basic or unmarked reading of -THu, and ‘can not’ of -nangku.
5.4 Meanings of -THu

For example, in the case of an ambiguous main clause like (13), *Ngada wirrka-ju* 'I dance-POT', the non-desiderative sense of epistemic possibility can be conveyed by replacing the ambiguous -THu with the unambiguous suffix -nkuru. Thus, (34a) and (b) can express the same meaning:

(34)  
a. *Ngada wirrka-ju.*  
    1SNOM dance-POT  
b. *Ngada wirrka-nkuru.*  
    1SNOM dance-PROP  
    'I can dance.'

The particle *marrbi* 'maybe' can also be used with reference to possibility:

(35) *Marrbi ngada wirrka-ju.*  
    maybe 1SNOM dance-POT  
    'I might dance.'

An important difference between a proprietive construction (34b) and a *marrbi* construction (35) is that the -nkuru suffix is oriented toward the subject of the verb, while *marrbi* applies to the whole proposition that follows it. Another important difference is that -nkuru carries no connotation that the possibility relates to future time. Hence (34b) is completely neutral with regard to time, while both (34a) and (35) would normally be interpreted as referring to some future time. The suffix -nkuru is used to express 'can' in contexts where wanting and possibility are contrasted, for example:

(36) *Niya biya-n-kuru, biya-nangku.*  
    3sNOM swim-NZR-PROP swim-NegPOT  
    'He could/is able to swim, (but) doesn't want to swim.'

Here, *biyankuru* unambiguously means 'can swim', and this triggers the reading of -nangku as 'doesn't want', because its other sense, 'can not', would not make sense in this context.

To summarise, then, the evidence indicates that most construction types distinguish between two meanings of -THu:
5.4 Meanings of -THu

-THu₁ 'want'
-THu₂ 'can after this time'

Possibly for -nangku the order of meanings should be reversed, to reflect the asymmetry noted above:

-nangku₁ 'can't after this time'
-nangku₂ 'doesn't want'

The one construction type that can take either -THu₁ or -THu₂, the main clause construction X V-THu, can readily be disambiguated, indicating that even here the suffix must be recognised as either -THu₁ or -THu₂, not some undifferentiated -THu₁/₂. The same applies to -nangku; example (36) shows a context that distinguishes clearly between -nangku₁ and -nangku₂ even in the ambiguous main clause construction.

An attempt to assign a meaning to -THu that would either combine or encompass the two meanings identified here would fail through being either too specific or too general. For example, one could attempt to construct a definition of X V-THu that combined the two meanings:

X can do V after this time
X wants: X will do V

But this definition would be too specific to account for the cases where this construction refers to possibility but not wanting, or wanting but not possibility. On the other hand, a definition general enough to cover all cases of X V-THu would be too general to explain anything more about its different functions.

Here, as in the previous chapter, a detailed examination of the functions and senses of a grammeme has found support for an analysis of that grammeme as polysemous, but in this case the polysemy applies in only one type of construction. The analysis proposed here is based on both syntactic and semantic evidence about the range of functions of this grammeme, and offers a consistent account relating these functions to meaning.

However, although the proposed analysis of -THu is consistent with the facts, it raises some important issues about the use of this grammeme in constructing language-internal definitions, particularly where there
seem to be two semantic elements ('X wants' and 'X will do V') that would normally be expressed in Kayardild by only one clause, $X \text{ V-THu}_1$. These issues are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### 5.5 Wanting within and across clauses

The Kayardild -THu constructions are examples of a type of desiderative construction where the grammeme that expresses the meaning 'want' occurs inside the clause that represents the wanted event. Although quite a few languages have this type of construction among a range of other desiderative constructions, it is comparatively rare for a language to have a clause-internal desiderative as the primary means of expressing the idea of wanting, as seen in the overview in Chapter 2.

These clause-internal desiderative constructions are worthy of detailed examination, because their grammatical properties raise questions about the extent to which they can be considered comparable to other desiderative constructions across languages, and about their role in language-internal definitions. As a first step toward understanding this type of construction, it is useful to examine the relationship of the 'want' word or morpheme to the clause or clauses over which it operates.

Semantically, the concept of wanting seems always to imply some projected event that is the 'target' of wanting. This wanted event most often consists of someone (either the 'wanter' or someone else) doing something; for example in the English sentence I want to dance, or in its Kayardild equivalent Ngada wirrka-ju, the wanted event is 'I dance'. In many, but not all, languages the target can also be a non-voluntary event (as in I want it to rain), or a nominal object (as in I want water) which still implies a target event ('I get/drink water').

Grammatically, the relationship of the word or morpheme that conveys the meaning of wanting (e.g. want in English, -THu in Kayardild) to the target event is different. In the English sentence, want is a main verb, and the target event appears as its complement. The language-specific rules of English grammar dictate that when the performer of the target action is coreferential with the main verb subject, the complement clause (to dance) is obligatorily subjectless. In the Kayardild sentence, 'dance' is the main verb, and the 'want' grammeme is affixed to it; in