Inflectional neutralization in Maay Maay negation

This paper explores the neutralization of person, number, gender distinctions in Maay Maay verbs, with a focus on negative sentences. Negative declarative clauses in Maay Maay involve a negative clause type marker $m\partial$ after the subject and also verb inflection; $m\partial$ precedes the verb complex. While verbs are usually inflected for person, number, and gender in both affirmative and negative clauses, data that we collected show that negative Simple Past verbs and negative Past Progressive verbs in declarative clauses neutralize inflectional distinctions onto a single value (1-3). These verbs take a suffix $-n\partial$, which is not found in any other negative tenses and aspects; cf. (4-6).

(1) Past	(2) Past Progressive	(3) Past Adjectival Predicates
a. anə mə Saaŋ nə bəríis 1SG NEG eat rice 'I did not eat rice.'	a. usə mə rooraa nə 3SG.M NEG run 'He was not running.'	a. aðə mə axmodə nə 2SG NEG cold 'You were not cold.'
b. jɛ mə ʕaaŋ nə bəríis 3SG.F NEG eat rice 'She did not eat rice.'	b. unə mə rooraa nə 1PL NEG run 'We were not running.'	b. ISIŋ mə axmodə nə 2PL NEG cold 'You (all) were not cold.'
c. unə mə Saaŋ nə bəriis 1PL NEG eat rice 'We did not eat rice.'	c. jɔ mə rooraa nə 3PL NEG run 'They were not running.'	c. jo mə axmodə nə 3PL NEG cold 'They were not cold.'
(4) Present	(5) Present Progressive	(6)Present Adjectival Predicates
 (4) Present a. lãŋkíi mə axrıjo buugək 3SG NEG read book.PL 'The man doesn't read books.' 	(5) Present Progressive a. us:ə mə roorəhajə 3SG NEG run 'He is not running'	
a. lãŋkíi mə axrı jo buugək 3SG NEG read book.PL	a. us:ə mə roorə hajə 3SG NEG run	Predicates a. aðə mə wíinit / wiinti 2SG NEG old 'You are not old.'

The contexts in (4-6) are inflected differently from (1-3), with a paradigm resembling that found in Somali. In Somali, present negative and present progressive negative are considered irrealis

contexts (Green, 2021). We argue that (4-6) also entail the irrealis mood, as the actions are unrealized or have not occurred. Realis mood contexts relate instead to given (i.e., known, topical, defined) information and are inflected differently. We illustrate that what is unique about (1-3) is speaker evidence that the actions are unrealized, rather than merely being supposed not to occur. We argue that this suggests subcategorization within the irrealis mood, namely the presence of a second, stronger irrealis mood, along the lines of that proposed in Stroke (1982), and one that encodes non-eyewitness events (Dixon 2004, 2012). To our knowledge, this is the first proposal of such a distinction in East Cushitic.