

# Exploring Mood in Neverver

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In a preverbal position, all clauses in the Neverver language of Malakula Island (Vanuatu) are either unmarked, or carry the morpheme *m-* prefixed to the verb. In this paper, I explore the distribution of unmarked and *m*-marked clauses, examining a number of semantic and grammatical contexts. I seek to establish whether the choice of using an unmarked clause or an *m*-marked clause is driven by the temporal location of the situation expressed in the clause, or by the status of that situation in reality. In doing so, I aim to test my earlier analysis of Neverver as being a mood language. The results, however, are divided, with temporal location appearing to be more salient in some contexts, and reality status appearing to be more salient in others. Relying predominantly on evidence from a variety of subordinate clause types, I maintain that Neverver is indeed a mood language, although an interpretation of the same morphological category as grammatical tense is certainly plausible in some contexts.

**1. INTRODUCTION.**<sup>1</sup> When reading grammars of Oceanic languages, two terms that are commonly encountered in the description of verbal morphology are “realis mood” and “irrealis mood.”<sup>2</sup> In Lynch, Ross, and Crowley’s (2002) survey of the Oceanic languages, half of the forty-two languages surveyed name a realis mood morpheme, an irrealis mood morpheme, or a contrast between realis and irrealis mood in verb phrase morphology. Synchronic analyses of several languages of Malakula (Vanuatu) identify “mood” as a relevant grammatical category.<sup>3</sup> Neverver (Barbour 2009) is included among these languages. Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2002) claim that Proto-Oceanic, the reconstructed ancestor language of Neverver, and indeed of most indigenous languages of

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented on my behalf by Ray Harlow at the 8th International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics, held at the University of Auckland in January, 2010. I would like to thank Ray Harlow, Liz Pearce, John Lynch, Alexander Onysko, Marta Degani, and two anonymous reviewers for their very thoughtful comments and suggestions. Thanks also to Bernard Comrie for prompting me to have a more critical look at my original analysis of Neverver.

2. The term “mood” has been applied to a variety of language structures and functions, and is treated as synonymous with “modality” by some linguists (cf. Crystal 2003), and as quite distinct from modality by others (cf. Portner 2009). In this paper, following general usage by Oceanic linguists, mood is treated as a grammatical label assigned to certain types of inflectional morphology associated with the verb phrase. The semantic characteristics of grammatical mood, as observed in the introduction to this paper, are seldom discussed in any detail. There is, however, a shared sense among linguists that mood systems encode different types of event actuality. The semantics of mood are considered in section 2.

Remote Oceania, was a mood language. They put forward a relatively confident hypothesis “that there was a mood distinction between a morphologically unmarked realis and a marked irrealis” (Lynch, Ross, and Crowley 2002:84).<sup>4</sup> This reconstruction is based on the prevalence of mood systems in the modern Oceanic languages.

The terms “realis mood” and “irrealis mood” are generally employed to refer to a semantic contrast in the status of situations. This contrast is coded in the verb phrase, where situations of one status will often be unmarked, and situations with the contrasting status will carry overt marking. Elliot (2000:56) observes that “there is a common underlying semantic role of identifying the status of an event as being grounded in perceived reality on the one hand (REALIS), or existing only as a conceptual idea, thought, or hypothetical notion on the other (IRREALIS)” (see section 2 below for a discussion of the semantics of mood).

Although mood is apparently a well-established category in the Oceanic literature, there has been some criticism of linguists’ use of the terms realis and irrealis in the individual descriptions of languages (cf. Elliot 2000, McGregor and Wagner 2006). This criticism appears to be justified. A cursory glance at almost any grammar of an Oceanic language that has been analyzed as displaying mood will find illustrations of realis and/or irrealis morphology. The illustrations serve the dual purposes of exemplifying the morphemes of interest, and at the same time justifying their descriptive labels. Further, it is an artifact of traditional grammatical descriptions that verb phrase morphology is treated in the section or chapter on the verb phrase, but not necessarily everywhere else in the grammar where it has relevance. A possible effect of this is to obscure crucial pieces of evidence that have almost certainly informed the linguist’s analysis and labeling of the morphology in question. There is seldom room in a traditional grammar for a detailed explication of the semantics of mood, or for a discussion of the author’s specific understanding of how the labels “realis” and “irrealis” apply to the data in question.

In terms of linguistic typology, previous comparative/typological research on the grammatical phenomenon of interest has focused predominantly on the indigenous North American (Mithun 1995) and Australian languages (McGregor and Wagner

3. Considering only the languages of Vanuatu, in Malakula, mood has been identified in Avava (Crowley 2006a), Aulua (Paviour-Smith 2005), V’ënen Taut (= Big Nambas) (Fox 1979), Nahavaq (Dimock 2009), Naman (Crowley 2006b), Neve’ei (Musgrave 2007), Unua (Pearce 2010), and Uripiv (McKerras n.d.). An informal survey of grammatical descriptions of north and central Vanuatu languages conducted by the author has located 24 languages analyzed as having a binary mood contrast in the verb phrase. A further 16 languages have been found where there appears to be a similar binary contrast, although the contrasting elements have not been labeled “mood.” Although apparently widely distributed, the analysis of a particular system as involving mood is not without controversy. For example, Neve’ei is described by Musgrave (2007) as displaying a realis/irrealis mood contrast, while Crowley (2002), writing on Neve’ei under its alternative name Vinmavis, claims that the language displays a nonfuture/future tense contrast, referring to the same preverbal morphology. My own reservations about the mood analysis of Neverver, along with a suggestion from Bernard Comrie (pers. comm.) that a tense-based analysis might equally apply, motivated the exploration presented in this paper.

4. It has been observed that not all daughter-languages display the unmarked realis/marked irrealis patterning reconstructed for Proto-Oceanic. In Lewo, for example, the realis is marked and irrealis is unmarked (Early 1994b). Abma (Schneider 2009) and Maii (Tryon 1996) also display this patterning. In addition, Maii displays stem-initial consonant alternation, which accompanies the presence or absence of mood morphology. Other languages, such as Nguna, rely exclusively on stem-initial consonant alternation to signal the same type of contrast (Lynch 1975).

2006), Indian languages (Bhat 1999), and those of Papua New Guinea (Roberts 1990, Bugenhagen 1994). In many of the languages investigated to date, mood marking either cooccurs with other tense/aspect markers, is restricted to a certain type of clause, or consistently combines realis-irrealis meanings with other functions, such as the expression of sequence or coordination.

While conceding that the label “irrealis” may have some descriptive value with respect to individual languages, Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994), and also Bybee (1998), observe that irrealis morphology functions in quite different ways in different languages. They claim that this variant behavior prevents irrealis from being described as a unitary grammatical category. Bybee (1998:264) found that “there is no widespread cross-linguistic evidence that such a semantic space [that includes imagined, projected, or otherwise unreal situations] has a single grammatical marker.” It must be acknowledged, however, that data from languages of the Oceanic family, particularly those of Vanuatu, have been excluded from typological studies, or have simply been unavailable. The exceptions are Manam (Lichtenberk 1983) and Lewo (Early 1994a), both of which display grammatical mood, and both of which are cited in typological work on mood.

The very first step in arriving at a typological understanding of a given phenomenon is to consider how that phenomenon presents itself in individual languages. The main aim of this paper is to address this issue by exploring the category of mood in *Neverver*. Previous typological research on mood is taken into consideration in an effort to define terminology and to identify semantic and grammatical contexts that may be of relevance to the description of mood in *Neverver*. In section 2, a definition of mood is offered, considering the need for a distinction between notional and grammatical categories, and associated terminology. In section 3, the relevant morphological category in *Neverver* is described, and its use in simple clauses is illustrated. A competing interpretation of the morphological category is put forward for consideration. In section 4, a number of main clause types are discussed. Each clause type has been identified as attracting either realis or irrealis mood in mood languages. Evidence from *Neverver* is considered in relation to these clause types. In section 5, the behavior of the relevant morphology in a variety of subordinate clause types is presented. The detailed examination of the grammatical category in question leads to the conclusion that *Neverver* does indeed express a contrast between the real and the unreal, while at the same time, it is acknowledged that an important function of the morphological category is to signal temporal distinctions.

**2. DEFINING THE CATEGORY OF MOOD.** To further the discussion of mood, it is useful to distinguish between the semantic notion of mood, and the grammaticalized expression of this notion. I offer a broad definition of the semantic notion, and a rather narrow definition of the grammatical one.

When looking at other categories associated with the verb, sets of terminology can be identified that helpfully distinguish between the notional and the grammatical. Taking tense as an example, in a notional sense we might discuss time or temporal location, and consider broad subdivisions of this category such as past time, present time, and future time. In a grammatical sense, we can discuss tense, and consider language-specific subdivisions such as nonfuture tense and future tense. (See also Comrie’s [1985] M-Tense and L-Tense.)

Similar terminological distinctions can be made for mood. In descriptive linguistics, the semantic notion of mood is commonly described as being concerned with the actuality of the situation (event, action, or state) expressed in a proposition (cf. Bhat 1999:8, Elliot 2000:66–67 on “reality status,” Foley and Van Valin 1984:213 on “status,” Lynch 1998:136, Mithun 1999:173, and Roberts 1990:373). A contrast is identified between propositions that express actual situations in the “real world,” and those that express non-actual situations in alternate “possible worlds.”

Drawing heavily on Elliot’s (2000:66–67) characterization of the notional category “reality status,” I propose the following working definition:

**Reality status** concerns the speaker’s perception of the actualization of the situation expressed in a proposition.

- An actualized situation prototypically is one where there is a perceived certainty, on the part of the speaker, of the factual reality of that situation’s taking place. The situation is “an actualized or certain fact of reality” (Elliot 2000:66).
- A nonactualized situation prototypically is one that is perceived by the speaker to exist only in an imagined or nonreal world. Such a situation “belongs to the realm of the imagined or hypothetical, and as such it constitutes a potential or possible event, but it is not an observable fact of reality” (Elliot 2000:67).

The contrast between actual and nonactual is superficially a binary distinction. Thus propositions, expressed in language, are either real or they are not, and the reality or truth value of the statement of a proposition can be tested against objective empirical evidence. When it comes to reality status, however, it is not a single objective truth that is of interest. Rather, it is the individual’s subjective experience of reality that is central. The ways that a proposition can be nonactual are numerous (cf. Chung and Timberlake 1985, Timberlake 2007, but see Roberts 1990 for a more restricted account of the nonactual). The semantic space of nonactual overlaps with the meanings of negation, future, command, counterfactual, and purpose. Bybee (1998:265), in her exposition of irrealis, argues that this diverse group of meanings can be “considered in the domain of the unreal.”

Foley and Van Valin (1984) distinguish between illocutionary force, (epistemic) status, and (deontic) modality. In their discussion of “status,” they model the contrast between actual and nonactual as a continuum rather than a dichotomy: “Status is often viewed as a binary distinction between realis-irrealis, and some languages use just such a binary distinction. However, within the irrealis dimension, many languages recognize further distinctions, whether the action is necessary, or likely, or merely possible. So within the realis-irrealis poles we may have a continuum” (Foley and Van Valin 1984:213). Foley and Van Valin (1984:213) observe that languages may grammaticalize different points along the continuum:

(1) real ← necessary — probable — possible → unreal

A further observation that can be made is that the actual is not simply restricted to propositions involving situations that the speaker has experience or evidence or knowledge of; as will be discussed in section 4, the actual can leak over into situations that are highly desirable or predictable, if not yet realized.

Bearing in mind that reality status is a subjective notion, there are some languages that grammaticalize a binary distinction between the actual and the nonactual, and there are others that display more complex grammaticalization patterns, with the nonactual being grammaticalized in multiple ways. Neverver is one of a number of Oceanic languages that appear to grammaticalize reality status in a simple binary way (see section 3 for a presentation of the morphology involved). As noted in the introduction, Oceanic linguists commonly employ the labels *realis mood* and *irrealis mood* in their grammatical descriptions. The labels appear to be assigned to morphology associated with the actual/nonactual distinction. To continue the discussion of mood in Neverver, I draw together my own and Elliot's (2000) semantic understanding of reality status and the grammatical mood terminology with which Oceanic linguists are already familiar, as illustrated in figure 1.

**3. THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY IN QUESTION.** In Neverver, the grammatical category in question involves a binary opposition that is expressed through the presence or absence of the morpheme *m-* prefixed to the verb. It is the only obligatory tense/aspect/mood category to be indicated on the verb or indeed in the verb phrase. In Barbour (2009), this category was analyzed as mood. The position of the morphology falls within a complex set of verbal prefixes that also express the person and number of the argument filling the subject position of the clause in which the verb appears. Table 1 shows the position of mood in the prefix complex.

The unmarked *realis* is illustrated in example (2):<sup>5</sup>

- (2) Julie, *abbung nat-uv*<sup>6</sup> Tavali Aut.  
 Julie yesterday IEXCL.REAL.PL-go Tavalī Aut  
 'Julie, yesterday we went to Tavalī Aut.' [NVCV01.1: 373.423]

**FIGURE 1. REALITY STATUS AND MOOD**

Notional category: reality status	Grammatical category: mood
actualized situation	realis mood
nonactualized situation	irrealis mood

**TABLE 1. MORPHOLOGY OF THE OBLIGATORY VERB PREFIX**  
 (Barbour 2009:256)

1 Person	2 Number (1) Inclusive/Exclusive	3 Mood	4 Number (2)
n- 1	i- 1st/3rd singular 1st inclusive nonsingular	∅- realis m- irrealis	∅- singular
k- 2	u- 2nd singular		r- dual
∅- 3	a- 2nd/3rd nonsingular 1st exclusive non-singular		t- plural

5. Abbreviations not found in the Leipzig Glossing Rules include: ANA, anaphoric; ANT, anterior; DUP, reduplicative prefix; IMPS, impersonal; NMOD, nominal modifier; PR, pronoun; PSN, personal; REAL, realis; RS, resumptive; SUB, subordinator.

6. The verb *vu* 'go' is irregular. It undergoes metathesis when the subject/mood prefix ends with either of the number morphemes *r-* 'dual' or *t-* 'plural'. The bilabial fricative, represented by *v*, is realized as a bilabial trill (written *bb*) when directly preceded by the irrealis morpheme, as illustrated in example (10) below.

The verb prefixes can be analyzed as follows:

- (3) n- a- Ø- t-  
 1 exclusive realis plural

The irrealis *m*- morpheme is illustrated in example (4):

- (4) Neks taem me nimt-uv mil nibit-lav.  
 next time just 1INCL.IRR.PL- go again 1INCL.IRR.PL- get  
 ‘Next time, we’ll go get them again.’ [NVCV03.101:699.693]

The verb prefixes can be analyzed as follows:

- (5) n- i- m- t-  
 1 inclusive irrealis plural  
 n- i- b- i- t-  
 1 inclusive irrealis epenthetic plural

Example (4) above displays two allomorphs of the irrealis morpheme, these being *m*- and *b*-. The *b*- allomorph appears in a predictable environment that may arise through the application of an important phonotactic constraint in the language. This constraint requires that words syllabify according to a maximal CVC syllable template. In order to ensure that the CVC syllable structure is maintained, an epenthetic vowel *i* is inserted to break up forbidden consonant sequences. This places the irrealis *m*- in an intervocalic context. The high-sonority environment triggers a dissimilation process from [m] to the prenasalized bilabial plosive [ʰmb].<sup>7</sup> So in example (4), underlying /nimt-/ ‘1INCL.IRR.PL’ is articulated as the surface form [ni<sup>mb</sup>it] when attached to the verb root /lav/. The derivation of the surface form is presented below:

- (6) underlying form: /nimtlav/ forbidden consonant sequence  
*i*-insertion: [nimitlav] irrealis *m*- in high-sonority context  
 dissimilation: [ni<sup>mb</sup>itlav] acceptable surface articulation

Surface articulations of allomorphs, rather than underlying forms of the complex subject/mood prefix, are presented in this paper.

Examples (2) and (4) display the absence and presence, respectively, of irrealis morphology in declarative constructions that carry lexical markers of time. In both examples, the temporal orientation is arranged around the moment of speech. The same contrast is also found in narrative sequences, where the temporal center is located at a point in time in the past. In narrative sequences, the temporal center is typically established in the opening clauses of the narrative. The temporal center then moves along with the narrative sequence. Each sequential narrative event that the speaker describes constitutes the new temporal center. In Neverver, when a speaker is preparing to describe a new narrative event, the irrealis morpheme is often employed first, in a structure that indicates that the event is imminent. It is not imminent in relation to the moment of speech (the Speech Time or ST) but rather it is imminent in relation to the temporal center of the narrative (the Reference Time or RT). The temporal orientation of irrealis-marked clauses then becomes relative future, or future-in-the-past. Having introduced the imminent event

7. Other contexts of high sonority also trigger dissimilation. Specifically, where the irrealis morpheme occurs between a vowel and a liquid (/r/ or /l/), the nasal dissimilates to the prenasalized plosive.

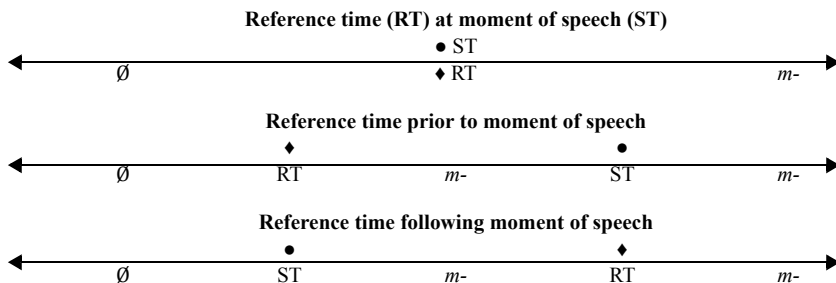
using an irrealis clause, the speaker then employs an unmarked realis clause to express the event itself within the narrative, at the point that it becomes a reality. This is illustrated in example (7), with the speaker expressing the imminent event of going and sitting down inside with irrealis morphology. The anticipation of this event turns into the actual event in the next clause, which is presented in the unmarked irrealis. Note that the realis clause is translated as ‘we went and sat down’, but it could equally be translated as ‘we go and sit down’.

- (7) *Nimt-uv nibit-vor bbukhut mil; nit-uv nit-vor.*  
 IINCL.IRR.PL-go IINCL.IRR.PL-sit inside again IINCL.REAL.PL-go IINCL.REAL.PL-sit  
 ‘We were going to go and sit inside again; we went and sat down.’  
 [NVKI28.38-39:133.069-135.035]

Examples (2), (4), and (7) provide evidence of a contrast between realis and irrealis mood in Neverver. However, it is also possible to analyze the presence or absence of *m-* in these clauses using a temporal parameter. Unmarked clauses express situations that take place at any time up to and including the moment of speech (ST). Unmarked clauses are restricted in their temporal distribution, as they will never express situations that follow the ST, even if the reference time (RT) follows the ST. In contrast, clauses marked with *m-* express events that take place both before and after the ST. If the *m*-event takes place before the ST, the irrealis clause is interpreted as expressing a situation that takes place after a designated RT. Thus, all situations that are to take place after the ST or after some RT prior to the ST are coded with *m-*. Figure 2 displays the temporal distribution of the morphology in question.

Given the temporal distribution of the morphology in question, what has previously been analyzed as a mood distinction (Barbour 2009) could equally be described as an absolute/relative tense distinction (cf. Comrie 1985:65). The unmarked clause expresses the absolute nonfuture (events prior to and including ST), as well as the relative nonfuture (events prior to and including RT, provided RT precedes ST). The clause marked with *m-* expresses the absolute future (events following ST), and the relative future (events following RT, even if RT precedes ST). The question raised by these alternate interpretations is whether the original mood analysis, contrasting realis and irrealis mood, should be abandoned in favor of the absolute/relative tense analysis, contrasting nonfuture and

**FIGURE 2. TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF SITUATIONS EXPRESSED IN UNMARKED AND *m*-MARKED CLAUSES**



future tense. This question is addressed in the following two sections, by examining the distribution of unmarked and *m*-marked clause types.

#### 4. EVIDENCE OF THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY OF MOOD.

Identifying mood as a grammatical category in a given language relies on complex evidence. There is no simple formula for establishing that a grammatical category is indeed mood, rather than tense or aspect, or some other category. Mithun (1995), Elliot (2000), and Palmer (2001) identify a number of semantic and grammatical contexts that are commonly associated with irrealis marking. In this section, several of these contexts are surveyed, along with contexts associated with realis marking. The behavior of Neverver data is considered with respect to each. Given the possible reanalysis of mood (realis/irrealis) as tense (nonfuture/future), contexts where the distribution of forms is more appropriately explained in terms of reality status rather than temporal location are of particular interest.

**4.1 REALITY STATUS AND TEMPORAL LOCATION.** When considering notional categories, nonfuture temporal location can be associated with actualized events, because events that have already happened or are currently happening can be understood as real (Mithun 1995:378–80, Elliot 2000:68–71, Palmer 2001:168–70). Future temporal location can be associated with nonactualized events, as it is more difficult to assert the reality of events that have not yet happened. On the connection between the notional and the grammatical, Elliot (2000:68) observes that “an event which is perceived as either having taken place or at least having been initiated, prototypically will be marked realis,” so we expect to find nonfuture temporal location expressed by realis mood.

However, it is also the case that in languages that have been analyzed as having a mood distinction, the division between nonfuture and future temporal location can be blurred. Speakers may employ realis mood to express some kinds of future situations. This is particularly the case when a speaker is certain that a situation located in the future will be actualized. Mithun (1995:378) comments that “speakers could exploit the Irrealis/Realis distinction to mark their expectation of actuation,” while Elliot (2000:68) notes that in some languages “even though an event may not in fact have been initiated, the certainty that it will occur is sufficient ... to classify the predicate status as realis.”

As illustrated in examples (2), (4), and (7), in Neverver the unmarked realis is a feature of clauses with a time reference up to and including the absolute/relative present, while the irrealis morpheme (*m*-) is attached to clauses with a time reference in the absolute/relative future. The potential to blur the boundary between nonfuture and future (by treating future events as realis) is not exploited, and a strict temporal division is maintained. Independently of other data, simple declarative constructions in Neverver such as those in (2), (4), and (7) constitute strong evidence for a tense analysis of the grammatical category in question, rather than a mood analysis.

**4.2 REALITY STATUS AND POLARITY.** Clauses marked for negative polarity have been found to attract irrealis marking in some languages (Mithun 1995:380–84, Elliot 2000:77–79, Palmer 2001:173–75). In a tense language, the polarity of a construction will be assigned independently of the tense. In a mood language, there



appear to be two possibilities. All situations with negative polarity may be marked as irrealis, regardless of the temporal nature of their nonactualization (be it counterfactual or potential). Alternatively, nonactualized events in the past (counterfactual) may be marked as realis because it is certain that the events did not occur, while nonactualized events in the future (potential) are treated as irrealis.<sup>8</sup>

In Neverver, negative morphology may be attached to either unmarked realis clauses or clauses carrying irrealis *m-*: situations expressed in unmarked clauses remain strictly associated with absolute/relative nonfuture time, while situations expressed in clauses marked with *m-* remain strictly associated with absolute/relative future time, regardless of polarity. Propositions are thus assigned their mood independently of their polarity. Example (8) displays negative polarity with past temporal reference in an unmarked realis clause; example (9) displays negative polarity with future temporal reference and irrealis morphology.

- (8) Be Helen, i-okh ku-rodrokx si stori anjing?  
 but Helen PSN.PR-2SG 2REAL.SG-hear NEG story DEM.DET  
 ‘But Helen, didn’t you hear that story?’ [NVCV03.64: 296.871]
- (9) Vinang i-ver “Ave. Nim-sir si nida.”  
 female 3REAL.SG-say No! 1IRR.SG-fetch NEG mother  
 ‘The woman said, “No, I won’t fetch Mother.”’ [NVKS02.36]

Because negation is assigned independently of the relevant grammatical category in Neverver, negation in simple declarative clauses does not contribute evidence in support of a mood analysis, but rather leaves open the possibility of a tense interpretation.

**4.3 REALITY STATUS AND QUESTIONS.** It has been observed in many mood languages that mood marking is independent of the formation of interrogatives; in other languages, however, interrogatives consistently attract irrealis mood (Mithun 1995:380, Elliot 2000:80, Palmer 2001:173).<sup>9</sup>

In Neverver, the choice of the unmarked clause or irrealis *m-* is independent of the status of the proposition as an interrogative or declarative. All propositions are thus either unmarked or carry *m-*, and are questioned independently.

- (10) Lon las Satete, i-okh ku-vu abi?  
 LOC last Saturday PSN.PR-2SG 2REAL.SG-go where  
 ‘Last Saturday, where did you go?’ [NVCV02.7: 12.713]

8. The differences in marking are indicative of a difference in scope. In mood languages where all negative utterances take irrealis coding, negative polarity can be thought of as inducing irrealis mood. Following Mithun (1995:382) this scope relation can be represented as follows:

–REALIS (NEGATION (PROPOSITION))

In other mood languages, mood marking is independent of negation. Following Mithun (1995:381), this scope relation can be represented as:

NEGATION (±REALIS (PROPOSITION))

9. As with negation, we can see a difference in scope in the possible markings of mood in interrogative clauses. In languages where questions may carry either realis or irrealis mood, the interrogative status is independent of the mood marking (see Mithun 1995:380):

QUESTION (±REALIS (PROPOSITION))

In languages where all questions attract irrealis mood, interrogative status can be thought of as inducing irrealis mood (see Mithun 1995:381):

–REALIS (QUESTION (PROPOSITION))

- (11) I-okh      me kum-bbu abi?  
 PSN.PR-2SG just 2IRR.SG-go where  
 ‘Where will you go?’ [NVKS04.18: 115.996]

Like negatives, interrogative constructions do not provide particular evidence of a mood system in Neverver.

**4.4 REALITY STATUS AND IMPERATIVES.** Commands have been thought of as referring to situations with future temporal location (cf. Lyons 1977). In a recent typological study of imperatives, however, Aikhenvald (2010:131) observes that “the ways imperatives are used may imply present and ongoing, rather than exclusively future, reference.” It is almost certainly the case that if some action needs to be commanded, it is because it has not yet been performed. In many contexts, including, for example, a parent speaking to a child, commands are uttered with the expectation of an immediate response, one that might even overlap with the utterance of the command itself. This means that by default the temporal location of events expressed by imperatives is in the nonpast, rather than simply in the future.

In terms of reality status, commands express nonactualized situations. Mithun (1995:376) notes that “commands can easily be conceived of as expressing thoughts of actions rather than the realization or actualization of them.” In mood languages, we might predict that commands will consistently attract irrealis morphology. This is the case for some mood languages. In other mood languages, it seems that the expectation that a command will be fulfilled is enough for a speaker to conceive of the commanded situation as actualized, and thus mark it with realis mood (Elliot 2000:377, Palmer 2001:169).

According to Aikhenvald (2010:9), imperatives sometimes “appear impoverished in that the grammatical categories they may express are fewer than those of statements and questions.” Many languages, including English, have an imperative construction that is devoid of tense/aspect/mood morphology (Sadock and Zwicky 1985:172). However, many others have imperative constructions that are marked for a variety of different grammatical categories, and Aikhenvald (2010:9) reports that “they may be just as rich, simply expressing different categories from declaratives.” In Neverver, we find the morpheme *m-* in imperative constructions, as illustrated in (12). Imperatives are never formed with unmarked clauses.

- (12) Kum-khan ibiskham!  
 2IRR.SG-eat one  
 ‘Eat one!’ [NVKS17:58]

Prohibitives (negative imperatives) in Neverver are expressed with the negative morpheme *si* and reduplication of the verb stem. In terms of the grammatical category in question, there are two options for coding. The first option, illustrated in example (13), employs a second person subject marker, along with the irrealis *m-* morpheme. The second option, illustrated in (14), employs an impersonal subject marker, along with the unmarked realis.<sup>10</sup>

10. Lichtenberk (1983:418) also identifies realis prohibition in Manam, an Oceanic language of Papua New Guinea.

- (13) Kum-se~sber si na!  
 2IRR.SG-DUP~touch NEG 1SG  
 ‘Don’t touch me!’ [NVKS10.66]
- (14) No, ar-ver~ver si.  
 no IMPS:REAL-DUP~say NEG  
 ‘No, don’t say that!’ (lit., ‘One doesn’t say that.’) [NVCV05.9: 1327.521]

The literal interpretation of the realis prohibitive ‘one doesn’t say that’ suggests that, from the speaker’s perspective, the prohibited situation does not, and therefore should not, generally occur in reality. Obviously there are contexts where the speaker will be able to see that a specific situation is indeed taking place, but we can conjecture that the strength of the speaker’s desire for the event to cease leads to the unmarked realis construction.

Mood languages that express politeness distinctions in commands with contrasting mood marking have been identified (see Mithun 1995:377–78 and Palmer 2001:181–83 for summaries of these). In Neverver, we could hypothesize that the impersonal realis form is more polite because it doesn’t directly address the commandee. Alternatively, we might consider the personal irrealis to be more polite because it doesn’t imply the actualization of the commanded situation. In Neverver, however, neither hypothesis holds, as both forms are used to shriek prohibitions at children and whisper to friends. Language consultants resisted a politeness interpretation. Rather, it seems that the key difference between realis and irrealis prohibitives is that the impersonal realis prohibitive reflects an older form of the language, used by linguistically conservative members of the speech community. Such speakers do not belong to a particular age category, but rather tend to be those who reside in the isolated Limap village. The personal irrealis prohibitive is employed among linguistically innovative community members who tend to reside in Lingarakh village, and who have far greater contact with speakers of other indigenous Malakula languages, along with Bislama and English.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to commands, reality status appropriately captures the varied behavior of the morphology involved. The irrealis *m-* is employed to command the actualization of a nonactual situation. Reality status can also be used to explain the presence of both realis and irrealis prohibitives, with irrealis prohibitives commanding the nonactualization of a situation (‘Don’t do it’), and realis prohibitives emphasizing the social convention of a particular situation being nonactualized (‘One doesn’t do that’). A tense interpretation is more problematic. The tense distinction described in section 3 is one of nonfuture/future. Cross-linguistically, imperatives are located in the nonpast, rather than simply in the future, thus giving rise to a past/nonpast distinction. In order to reconcile the distribution of clause types among declarative and imperative constructions, we would need to propose two competing models of tense in the place of a single model of mood.

**4.5 REALITY STATUS AND HABITUALS.** Comrie (1985:40) argues that the habitual is not of itself a separate tense, but rather that “habitual meaning lies on the boundary of the three systems of tense, aspect, and mood” and that “it involves location of a situation across a large slice of time (perhaps the whole of time) rather than just at

11. Barbour (2010) presents a fuller analysis of the sociolinguistic situation in which Neverver is spoken.

some single point.” In some mood languages, sequences of habitual events are marked with irrealis (Elliot 2000). A suggested explanation from Elliot (2000:79) is that “the non-specific nature of the events ... leads to the use of irrealis, since no particular realized occasion is being discussed.” Givón (1994:270) also claims that, semantically, habituais have irrealis properties, in that they do not “refer to any particular event that occurred at any specific time.” Elsewhere, realis mood may mark habitual events (Barbour 2009). Givón (1994:270) explains this alternate behavior by appealing to the pragmatic notion of pre-supposition, observing that “from a communicative perspective, habitual-marked clauses tend to be strongly asserted.” My own suggested explanation for this pattern of marking is that habitual events are routinely actualized in a speech community, and thus can attract realis mood.

In Neverver, in descriptions of habitual processes routinely actualized by community members, the unmarked realis occurs.

- (15) Las turien nat-rev me noron nani  
 occasion.INDF some 1EXCL.REAL.PL-pull just leaf coconut  
 nati-rrik i-vu lon nokhos ang.  
 1EXCL.REAL.PL-throw 3REAL.SG-go LOC garden ANA  
 ‘Sometimes we just pull coconut fronds and throw them on the garden.’  
 [NVDL07.7]

As we might expect, realis also occurs when the habitual past is used. Note also the reduplication of the verb stem, and the serialized *duvakh* ‘first’ to express the past habitual in example (16) below.

- (16) lon nesal an kati-le-lles-duvakh ye akhsung  
 LOC road NMOD 2REAL.PL-DUP~bathe-first RS.PR inland  
 ‘on the road where you used to bathe inland ...’ [NVCV09.14: 95.013]

We can compare the unmarked realis for habituais (which are routinely actualized) with irrealis marking in instructional texts, which describe a sequence of events that have yet to be actualized by the addressee.

- (17) Kum-jik nolong lon nakhabb.  
 2IRR.SG-put laplap LOC fire  
 ‘(You) put the laplap on the fire.’ [NVDL11.10]
- (18) Kub-ras niblokhlokh ang im-bbu lon besen ang.  
 2IRR.SG-scoop.up kava.plant ANA 3IRR.SG-go LOC bowl ANA  
 ‘(You) scoop up the kava into the bowl.’ [NVE36.2]

A mood analysis rather nicely captures the distribution of the morphology in question over habitual meanings. In theory, however, nonfuture tense could also be used to express habitual meanings, and future tense used to express instructional meanings.

**4.6 SUMMARY OF MOOD IN SIMPLE CLAUSES.** The contexts explored so far have all been described as variously attracting realis and/or irrealis marking in the typological literature on mood languages, as shown in table 2. When trying to evaluate the analysis of Neverver as a mood language, the evidence provided in simple declaratives, interrogatives, and negatives is rather ambiguous. Each context tolerates either a

tense or a mood interpretation. The marking of imperatives and prohibitives is perhaps more convincingly explained with reality status. Imperatives and personal prohibitives employ *m-* to signal nonactualization by the moment of speech. Impersonal prohibitives are expressed in an unmarked clause indicating strongly preferred nonoccurrence. The marking of habituais is also coherently explained in terms of reality status, with realis mood indicating routine actualization. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Having looked at the distribution of simple unmarked and *m*-marked clauses in a range of contexts, I now turn to the behavior of the same morphology in a variety of subordinate clause contexts.

**5. REALITY STATUS AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES.** Subordinate clauses in Neverver carry the same morphology as main clauses. That is, each subordinate clause is either an unmarked realis clause or carries the irrealis *m-*. There is no special verbal morphology associated with the subordinate clause. As will be demonstrated below, in the analysis of subordinate clauses, there are several places where reality status provides an explanation of the function and distribution of the morphemes in question that is more convincing than temporal location.

**5.1 REALITY STATUS AND ADVERBIAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES.** Two types of adverbial subordinate clause are of particular interest in the investigation of mood marking in Neverver. These are reason/purpose clauses and condition clauses.

**5.1.1 Reason and purpose clauses.** Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang (2007) identify the importance of a notion like reality status in their description of reason and purpose clauses. They claim that the main difference between reason and purpose clauses relates to their realization: “They differ in that the purpose clauses express a motivating event which must be *unrealized* at the time of the main event, while reason clauses express a motivating event which may be *realized* at the time of the main clause event. In most languages, even those that use the same morphology for signaling purpose and reason, then, there will be different marking to signal the unrealized status of the purpose clause versus the realized status of the reason clause” (Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang 2007:250–51, italics in original).

**TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF MOOD BEHAVIOR IN SIMPLE CLAUSES**

Interaction of Reality status and...	Assignment of morphemes in Neverver	Tense or Mood?	Ref.
Temporal Location	$\emptyset$ - for absolute/relative nonfuture <i>m-</i> for absolute/relative future	Tense (though mood also possible)	4.1
Temporal Location/ Negation	$\emptyset$ / <i>m-</i> assigned independently of polarity	Ambiguous	4.2
Temporal Location/ Interrogative	$\emptyset$ / <i>m-</i> assigned independently of interrogative/declarative	Ambiguous	4.3
Imperative	<i>m-</i> assigned to all imperatives	Mood	4.4
Prohibitive	<i>m-</i> assigned to personal prohibitives $\emptyset$ assigned to impersonal prohibitives	Mood	4.4
Habituais	$\emptyset$ assigned to all habitual events	Mood (though tense also possible)	4.5

In Neverver, reason and purpose clauses are both introduced with the subordinating conjunction *il*. Reason clauses typically appear as unmarked realis clauses, as illustrated in (19) and (20) below. The situations expressed in the reason clauses are all temporally prior to the result clause, and at the same time they express actualized situations. A tense interpretation is thus tolerated with these examples.

- (19) Ar-rot            i-rvikh            il            ari-trokh    nidam  
 3REAL.DU-feel 3REAL.SG-be good ADV.SUB 3REAL.DU-see yam  
 i-tev                            lon nokhos ang.  
 3REAL.SG-begin to grow LOC garden ANA  
 ‘They felt good because they saw the yams growing in the garden.’  
 [NVKS13.48]

- (20) Be niterikh-vidro            ang i-ssor            si il            i-rongil  
 but child-preadolescent.girl ANA 3REAL.SG-talk NEG ADV.SUB 3REAL.SG-know  
 si mang no-ssor-ian titi.  
 NEG man.ANA NMLZ-talk-NMLZ 3POSS.SG  
 ‘The girl didn’t talk because she didn’t know the man’s language.’  
 [NVKS14.28]

Purpose clauses, illustrated by example (21) below, obligatorily carry irrealis marking, indicating the nonactualization of the purpose clause situation at the time that the main clause situation is taking place. A relative future interpretation of the purpose clause situation is also possible here, given the chronological sequencing that is inherent in means-purpose constructions.

- (21) Ati-vlem            lon nidong            il            abit-lav    nivri.  
 3REAL.PL-come LOC mangrove.swamp ADV.SUB 3IRR.PL-get crab  
 ‘They came to the mangrove swamp to get crabs.’ [NVKS17.80]

**5.1.2 Condition-consequence clauses.** In Neverver, irrealis mood occurs in both the main and subordinate clause of condition-consequence constructions. The conditional subordinator *besi ~ asi* introduces the condition. This structure is usually employed for conditionals that are potentially realizable, or predictive, as illustrated in example (22) below.

- (22) Besi ib-rong~rong ga im-bbu me ib-lukh-da tang.  
 if 3IRR.SG-DUP~want then 3IRR.SG-go just 3IRR.SG-stay- PART there  
 ‘If he wants, then he can just go and rest there.’ [NVCT05.27. 377.093]

It is also possible to express counterfactual conditionals using the same structure. Contextual clues allow the hearer to disambiguate between these two broad types of conditional constructions. Example (23) describes an incident where a woman was struck on the head by a falling coconut. The woman was not injured badly. The conditional construction describes what might have happened if the coconut had fallen on the base of her neck.

- (23) Besi im-dak            ei lon nakhsan i-gen            kut an  
 if 3IRR.SG-fall.over 3SG LOC base.of.s.t. 3REAL.SG-like LOC.PR NMOD  
 im-gal            ei ang o! im-ngot            ing.  
 3IRR.SG-strike 3SG ANA oh 3IRR.SG-be.broken exclamation!  
 ‘If it had fallen on the base, like on the place where it struck, oh, it would have broken for sure!’  
 [NVCV06.36: 593.557]

In example (24), the speaker is lamenting the burden of cake-making for an upcoming wedding that has been placed on the local pastor. This is another counterfactual condition; the counterfactual consequence (the pastor being less overworked) is not expressed, but the current reality of the pastor's busy schedule has just been discussed.

- (24) Besi abit-lav~lav si kek ang im-bbu tuan ei.  
 if 3IRR.PL-DUP~get NEG cake ANA 3IRR:SG-go LOC.PSN 3SG  
 'If only they hadn't assigned the cake (making) to him.'  
 [NVCV10.90: 449.371]

We can observe that, while the situation in example (22) is located in the future, the situations in examples (23) and (24) are located in the past, but refer to nonactualized (counterfactual) situations. In all three examples, the irrealis *m-* morpheme appears. A tense interpretation of this morphology is odd in these constructions; reality status, with the use of irrealis *m-* in both potentials and counterfactuals, offers a more coherent explanation.

**5.2 REALITY STATUS AND COMPLEMENT CLAUSES.** There are three general subcategories of complement clauses in Neverver, based on the patterns of verbal morphology that occur in matrix and complement clause. Each category is considered below, and then a discussion of two propositional attitude verbs, which pattern rather differently, is offered.

**5.2.1 Complement clauses with independent marking.** Predicates of utterances are independently marked for the grammatical category in question, and almost all possible combinations of matrix marking, polarity, and complement marking occur in the text corpus. Example (25) below displays past time reference in an unmarked matrix clause, and an imperative with inherent nonpast time reference marked by *m-* in the direct speech complement.

- (25) Ga mama titi i-ver "Kum-bbulem nakh."  
 then father 3POSS.SG 3REAL.SG-say 2IRR.SG-come here  
 'Then his father said, "Come here."' [NVCT02.40: 196.029]

Because the marking of each clause is independent, this particular subcategory of complement clause does not provide any persuasive evidence of a mood system. Rather, it lends itself more to a tense interpretation, given the alignment of the morphology in question with temporal distinctions.

**5.2.2 Complement clauses with obligatory *m-* marking.** The second subtype of complement-taking predicate [CTP] requires irrealis *m-* on the complement. These include the following CTPs:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| (26) Modal        | rongil 'can, be able'  |
| Desiderative      | ver 'want/intend'<br>(rong)rong 'want'<br>rongrokh 'want/like' |
| Anti-Desiderative | rosikh 'not want'  |
| Achievement       | sisien 'decide to'<br>setta 'remember to'                      |

setvun ‘forget to’  
kretikh ‘try to make’  
Phasal: ingressive tabatn, stait(em) ‘start’

Like the purpose clauses described in 5.1.1, in the examples (27) through (30) below the proposition expressed in the complement is presented as nonactualized, regardless of the mood or polarity of the matrix clause.

- (27) Ei i-rongil im-bbulem.  
3SG 3REAL.SG-be able 3IRR.SG-come  
‘He can come.’ [NVE05.12]
- (28) Ei i-rongil si im-bbulem lon Tasdei.  
3SG 3REAL.SG-be able NEG 3IRR.SG-come LOC Thursday  
‘He can’t come on Thursday.’ [NVCV10.52.308.625]
- (29) I-sisien i-mbbu, i-vu.  
3REAL.SG-decide 3IRR.SG-go 3REAL.SG-go  
‘He decided to go and he went.’ [NVKI06.35]
- (30) Ave! Na ni-rosikh kum-lav na.  
No! 1SG 1REAL.SG-not.want 2IRR.SG-get 1SG  
‘No! I don’t want you to marry me.’ [NVKS02.21]

**5.2.3 Complement clauses with polarity-determined marking.** In the third category of CTP, the coding of the complement depends on the coding of the CTP. This category includes the following predicates:

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| (31) Immediate perception                 | rot ‘sense’           |
|   | rodrokh ‘hear’        |
|   | khit~(khi)trokh ‘see’ |
| Knowledge and<br>acquisition of knowledge | rongil ‘know’         |
|   | rodrokh ‘hear that’   |
| Manipulative (causative)                  | ve ‘make’             |

Positive polarity and realis mood in the main clause indicate actualization of the complement situation, which is thus expressed with the unmarked realis, as in example (32). Positive polarity and irrealis mood in the main clause indicate nonactualization of the complement situation, which is thus coded with irrealis mood, as in example (33).

- (32) I-ve naus tokhtokh i-vov.  
3REAL.SG-make rain huge 3REAL.SG-fall  
‘He made a huge rain fall.’ [NVCT07.53.292.944]
- (33) Kum-bbue im-das vere im-bbu mil tuan mama titi.  
2IRR.SG-make 3IRR.SG-go.down outside 3IRR.SG-go again LOC.PSN father 3POSS.SG  
‘You make her come outside and go again to the place of her father.’ [NVDL03b.23]

Negative polarity in the main clause implies nonactualization of the complement proposition, and produces irrealis marking on the complement verb as in example (34).



- (34) Mang i-ve si naus im-bbuov.  
 man.ANA 3REAL.SG-make NEG rain 3IRR.SG-fall  
 ‘He didn’t make the rain fall.’ [NVKW08.44]

Example (34) provides the first piece of evidence that negation has an impact on the coding of reality status in Neverver. Here an interpretation of the temporal location of the rain situation would be odd. Nonactualization offers a more plausible explanation of the presence of *m-* in the complement, with the rain situation being nonactualized.

**5.2.4 Propositional attitude predicates.** There are two propositional attitude predicates of note in Neverver. These are *rokkamsukh* ‘believe’, and the serial verb *ver-bor* ‘think (from ‘say’ + ‘maybe’)’. The verbs pattern in a somewhat different way from each other, and from other categories of CTPs. *Rokkamsukh* ‘believe’ is attested with complements describing nonfuture situations. This CTP always appears in an unmarked clause, and its complement is also an unmarked clause, suggesting that one’s beliefs are, at least for the believer, a reality. It does not appear to be possible to encode one’s beliefs with irrealis mood—to say, for example, ‘I will believe ...’.

- (35) Ni-rokkamsukh i-vu me i-gang.  
 1REAL.SG-believe 3REAL.SG-go just 3REAL.SG-like.so  
 ‘I believe it went like so.’ [NVKI24.57]
- (36) Ni-rokkamsuk ar-rongil si abi-tbbukh si.  
 1REAL.SG-believe IMPS.REAL-know NEG IMPS.IRR-have NEG  
 ‘I believe they don’t know they haven’t got it.’ [NVKI23.60]

The CTP *rokkamsukh* also appears once in the corpus in a serial construction with the utterance predicate *ver* ‘say’. Like examples (35) and (36), the complement is marked for realis mood, signaling the reality for the subject of *rokkamsukh* that the proposition encoded in the complement is real. Crucially in (37), the belief attributed to the subject of the matrix clause is false. The child in question had in fact been swept away by floodwaters.

- (37) Adr at-rokkamsukh at-ver [niterikh ang i-dum  
 3NSG 3REAL.PL-believe 3REAL.PL-say child ANA 3REAL.SG-run  
 i-vu-vev aiyem].  
 3REAL.SG-go-go.to home  
 ‘They believed that the child had run back home.’ [NVKS14.14]

As an extension from these text-based data, elicited constructions were sought with the CTP negated. The resulting constructions involved *m-*marked complements. In addition, a complementizer marked the beginning of the complement clause, although complementizers are not usually attested with *rokkamsukh* in the text corpus. With these kinds of examples, we can infer that what is not believed is considered nonactual.

- (38) Ni-rokkamsukh si an nibarbar ib-yal.  
 1REAL.SG-believe NEG COMP pig 3IRR.SG-fly  
 ‘I don’t believe that pigs fly.’ [NVKW08.2]

When considering *ver-bor* ‘think’, coding appears to be manipulated depending on the speaker’s belief about the reality status of the complement situation. Evidence for this patterning comes mainly from elicited data, and it is possible that patterns in conversa-

tional usage differ. On the basis of elicited structures, however, it appears that when a speaker has a stronger conviction that a complement situation has been actualized, both the matrix clause and the complement are expressed with the unmarked realis, as in (39). A weaker conviction of complement actualization results in the matrix clause being marked with *m-*, while the complement remains unmarked, as in (40).

- (39) Na ni-ver-bor           vinang i-vu       ij.  
 1SG 1REAL.SG-say-maybe female 3REAL.SG-go ANT  
 'I think it likely/assert that she has gone.' [NVE26.43]

- (40) Nim-bbuer-bor ei i-vlem.  
 IIRR.SG-say-maybe 3SG 3REAL.SG-come  
 'I speculate that he has come.' [NVKW08.20]

For nonactualized situations, again a stronger conviction of eventual actualization results in the unmarked realis in the matrix clause, as in (41). A weaker conviction of eventual event actualization results in irrealis marking in the matrix clause as in (42). All nonactualized situations expressed in the complements of *ver-bor* are marked with irrealis morphology.

- (41) Na ni-ver-bor           ei im-bbulem ing.  
 1SG 1REAL.SG-say-maybe 3SG 3IRR.SG-come exclamation  
 'I think it likely/assert that he will come!' [NVE16.16]

- (42) Nim-bbuer-bor ei im-bbulem.  
 IIRR.SG-say-maybe 3SG 3IRR.SG-come  
 'I speculate that he will come.' [NVKW08.21]

Interestingly, it seems that the speaker's belief or understanding of the actualization of the complement situation plays a key role in determining the marking of the matrix clause. To reiterate, a stronger belief in the actuality of the complement situation leads to a realis matrix clause, while a weaker belief in the actuality of the complement situation leads to an irrealis matrix clause. This patterning of the matrix clause resists a tense interpretation.

Unlike *rokkamsukh* 'believe', the serial verb *ver-bor* 'think' does not appear with negative morphology in the matrix clause. Language consultants considered constructions equivalent to "I don't think *x*" to be ungrammatical, although they did produce the equivalent of "I think *x* is not true," with negation in an *m*-marked complement clause.

Turning now to the coding of the complement of *ver-bor*, this depends on the supposed temporal location of the complement situation, even when that situation may not actually have occurred. Like the nonfuture complements of 'believe' that must be expressed in unmarked clauses, the nonfuture complements of 'think' also appear in unmarked clauses. It appears that if one believes in, or is speculating about, the reality of a nonfuture situation, then that situation is considered to be real and is coded accordingly. Real world evidence may well be to the contrary, but if it is unavailable to the believer/speculator, then the situation counts as actualized. Future time complements of *ver-bor* 'think' appear in *m*-marked clauses. Reality status can account for the distribution of unmarked and *m*-marked matrix and subordinate clauses involving the propositional attitude predicates *ver-bor* 'think' and *rokkamsukh* 'believe'. Temporal location provides a

useful explanation in places, but is not particularly helpful in accounting for the marking of the matrix verb *ver-bor*.

**5.3 THE BEHAVIOR OF RELATIVE CLAUSES WITH INDEFINITE HEADS.** Of interest in the formation of relative clauses are examples in which the head noun is modified by a number relative clause. Numbers are verbal in Neverver and, like other verbs, are marked for the grammatical category in question. They are restricted in their subject morphology, however, carrying an invariant third person singular subject prefix. When the head noun is definite, a subordinating morpheme *an* occurs, marking the beginning of the relative clause. When the head noun is indefinite, the relative clause directly follows the head noun, with no intervening subordinator. Relative clauses with indefinite heads commonly contain the numeral *skham* ‘one’, which functions to highlight indefiniteness.

The following series of elicited constructions display the patterning of the grammatical category in question. In this series, most examples tolerate a temporal interpretation; however, reality status seems a more natural interpretation.

- (43) I-khan        navuj i-skham.  
 3REAL.SG- eat    banana 3REAL.SG- one  
 ‘He ate a/one (nonfuture/actualized) banana.’ [NVE03.14]
- (44) Ei im-khan    navuj ibi-skham.  
 3SG 3IRR.SG-eat banana 3IRR.SG-one  
 ‘He will eat a (future/nonactualized) banana.’ [NVE03.17]
- (45) Ei i-khan        si    navuj ibi-skham.  
 3SG 3REAL.SG-eat NEG banana 3IRR.SG-one  
 ‘He didn’t eat a (future/nonactualized) banana.’ [NVE03.19]
- (46) Ei im-khan    si    navuj ibi-skham.  
 3SG 3IRR.SG-eat NEG banana 3IRR.SG-one  
 ‘He will not eat a (future/nonactualized) banana.’ [NVE03.20]

The most problematic example for a tense interpretation is (45), where the subject didn’t eat a banana. The relative clause modifying ‘banana’ is marked with *m-* (which in this case takes the *b-* allomorph). The banana in question is more easily understood as being nonactualized in reality (counterfactual) rather than temporally located in the future.

Although the constructions above were provided in elicitation sessions, the same patterning is found in naturally occurring text material, illustrated in (47) below.

- (47) Niri-tbbukh        si    nakhmal ibi-skham ...  
 1INC.REAL.DU- have NEG house 3IRR.SG-one  
 ‘We don’t have a (future/nonactualized) house...’ [NVCT05.22:350.754]

Examples (45) and (47) provide the second piece of evidence that negation has an impact on the realization of the morphological category in question (see section 5.2.3 for evidence in causative constructions). Here again, negation in the matrix clause results in an *m*-marked subordinate clause. In these relative clause constructions, and particularly in examples (45) and (47), a tense interpretation is resisted in favor of a mood interpretation, with number subordinate clauses modifying imaginary entities being *m*-marked as nonactual.

### 5.4 SUMMARY OF MOOD IN SUBORDINATE CONSTRUCTIONS.

The behavior of the grammatical category in question with respect to subordinating constructions is summarized in table 3. In almost every case, the morphology in question is more convincingly analyzed as mood rather than tense. The clear exception is the marking of utterance predicates and their complements, which pattern more like independent simple clauses and tolerate a tense interpretation. Reason and purpose clauses also tolerate a tense interpretation, although a mood analysis is certainly justifiable.

**6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION.** In carrying out this study of mood in Neverver, my initial aim was to explore the distribution of unmarked and *m*-marked clauses and to identify evidence either for or against a mood analysis. A survey of the typological literature on mood provided a number of semantic and grammatical contexts that have the potential to attract realis and/or irrealis marking in mood languages. The behavior of grammatical marking with respect to each of these contexts can serve to provide evidence of a mood system. Rather than producing an unambiguous result, the examination has provided evidence that both temporal location and reality status are salient in the language, and that the relevant morphological category functions to signal both types of notional information.

Looking only at simple declarative and interrogative clauses, an examination of Neverver suggests that temporal location is the salient notional category, with nonfuture time being unmarked, and future time being marked by the prefix *m*-. When examining imperatives and prohibitives, habituals, and a variety of subordinate clause types, however, particularly where negation is present in the matrix clause, the tense analysis becomes problematic. In these contexts, the notional category of reality status appears

**TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF MOOD BEHAVIOR IN COMPLEX CLAUSES**

Interaction of Reality status and...	Assignment of morphemes in Neverver	Tense or Mood?	Ref.
Reason/Purpose Clauses	typically $\emptyset$ for reason clauses obligatorily <i>m</i> - for purpose clauses	Mood (though tense also possible)	5.1.1
Condition Clauses	<i>m</i> - for condition-consequence (potential/predictive/counter-factual)	Mood	5.1.2
Complements of Utterance CTPs	independent	Ambiguous	5.2.1
'Irrealis' complements	obligatory <i>m</i> - complement	Mood	5.2.2
Polarity-determined complements	obligatory <i>m</i> - complement when matrix is <i>m</i> - and/or negative	Mood	5.2.3
<i>rokkamsukh</i> 'believe'	obligatorily $\emptyset$ matrix obligatorily $\emptyset$ complement when positive matrix; <i>m</i> - complement when negative matrix	Mood	5.2.4
<i>ver-bor</i> 'think'	matrix marking manipulated according to speaker perception of complement event actualization	Mood	5.2.4
	<i>m</i> - for supposed future time situations in complement $\emptyset$ - for supposed nonfuture time situations in complement	Tense (although mood also possible)	5.2.4
Number relative clauses	obligatory <i>m</i> - in relative clauses when matrix is <i>m</i> - and/or negative	Mood	5.3

more salient, with actual situations being unmarked and nonactual situations being grammaticalized with the prefix *m-*.

In terms of grammatical analysis, descriptive linguists are obliged to assign labels to grammatical systems and their component parts. It is certainly the case that the system under examination is employed to express a binary notional distinction between nonfuture and future temporal location in some simple clauses. However, given that subordinate clauses are generally recognized as being structurally more conservative than main clauses, and that this is where a mood analysis is more convincing, assigning the label “mood” to the contrast between unmarked and *m*-marked clauses is probably justifiable. Diachronically, it is quite plausible, then, that Neverver retains the Proto-Oceanic distinction between realis and irrealis mood reconstructed by Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2002) that was mentioned in the introduction to this paper.

This study has raised a number of questions concerning, for example, the boundaries between the notional categories of temporal location and reality status, and definitions of these categories, including the characteristics that would need to be displayed in an unambiguously mood-type language and the variation in grammaticalization patterns that appear in different mood-type languages. Alongside these synchronic matters, there are questions about diachronic shifts that may occur in the forms and functions of grammatical categories. I am considering these, among other questions, in a comparative project that is currently in the planning stages, on mood in the Oceanic languages.

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