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Chapter 6

Negation in Murrinhpatha

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This chapter discusses negation strategies in Murrinhpatha, a non-Pama-Nyungan polysynthetic language from the Daly region of northern Australia. Murrinhpatha is spoken by 2500–3000 people, mainly located in the remote township of Wadeye (Port Keats) in the Northern Territory, where it is the language of daily communication and one of a small number of Australian languages still learned as a first language by all children in the community. Standard negation structures in Murrinhpatha are typical for languages of northern Australia, with an initial negative particle combining with a verb in irrealis mood; therefore of the mixed Type SymAsy category of Miestamo (2013). The expression of negative existence and possession requires a distinct construction type involving specialized negative predicates formed from the nominal classifiers. Such a system appears new to the typological literature on negation.

Keywords: Australian languages, nominal classifiers, irrealis, negation, Murrinhpatha.

1 The language

This chapter discusses negation strategies in Murrinhpatha (ISO: mwf, Glottocode: murr1258), a non-Pama-Nyungan polysynthetic language from the Daly region of northern Australia. Murrinhpatha is spoken by 2500–3000 people, mainly located in the remote township of Wadeye (Port Keats) in the Northern Territory. Murrinhpatha is the primary language of daily communication in Wadeye and surrounding communities, and one of a small number of Australian languages still learned as a first language by all children in the community. It is therefore one of the stronger traditional languages in the Australian context.



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In early research Murrinhpatha was assumed to be a language isolate (Tryon 1974), but more recently it has been shown to belong to the Southern Daly family with Ngan'gityemerri (Green 2003). Broader relationships are as yet unestablished, but there are clear areal (or possibly genetic) similarities with the Western Daly family, as discussed in Nordlinger (2017). Aspects of the grammatical structure of Murrinhpatha have been described by a number of researchers, most notably Walsh (e.g. 1976; 1996; 1997), Street (e.g. 1987; 1996), and more recently Blythe (e.g. 2009; 2013), Mansfield (e.g. 2014; 2016; 2019) and Nordlinger (e.g. 2010; 2011; 2015; 2017), but none of these publications have focused in detail on negation.

Murrinhpatha shares many typological characteristics common to polysynthetic languages, including syntactically free clausal word order, optionality of argument NPs, and a complex verbal template. This means that clauses often consist of just a verb, and that external NPs for arguments are often not present. Verbs in Murrinhpatha are (mostly) complex predicates, made up of two discontinuous stem elements which together define the predicational semantics and argument structure. These are referred to as the 'classifier stem' and the 'lexical stem'. Classifier stems belong to 38 distinct paradigms encoding generic event-classifying semantics and also encode tense/mood and subject person and number. 11 of the 38 classifier stems can occur alone as the sole verbal predicate. Lexical stems provide more specific lexical semantics and can never occur alone without combining with a classifier stem.[1]

The basic templatic structure of the Murrinhpatha verb is shown in Table 1;[2] the two stem elements are given here in bold. The only truly obligatory slot in the verb is Slot 1, since some verbs can consist of just a classifier stem, but most verbs are complex predicates, and so have slots 1 and 5 minimally filled.

This chapter aims to provide a detailed overview of negation and negation constructions in Murrinhpatha following the questionnaire provided by the editors (Miestamo 2025 [this volume]). Some features of negation constructions in Murrinhpatha that have not been discussed in the literature before include the polarity reversal that arises from the use of irrealis mood in both negative declarative and negative deontic constructions, which results in a single clause being ambiguous between meanings with opposite truth conditions (e.g. 'didn't do' vs

[1]For a more detailed discussion of the system see Nordlinger (2015), Mansfield (2019), and the references cited therein.

[2]Mansfield (2019) notes some variation in morph order on the right edge of this template, especially in the speech of younger speakers, but this variation doesn't affect the data being discussed in this paper.

Table 1: Murrinhpatha basic verbal template

Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Slot 4	Slot 5	Slot 6	Slot 7	Slot 8	Slot 9
Classifier stem (portmanteau with SUBJ person/ number and TAM)	SUBJ Number / OBJ marker / OBL marker	Reflexive-reciprocal	Incorporated body part/ Applicative	**Lexical Stem**	Tense/ aspect/ mood (TAM)	Incorporated adverbial	Number (SUBJ or OBJ)	Incorporated adverbial

'shouldn't do (but did)') (§2.1); and the existence of negative classifier predicates to express negative existence and negative possession (§2.3.3).

The data for this chapter is taken primarily from my fieldwork on the language since 2005; a collaborative Murrinhpatha corpus (Mansfield et al. 2019) with contributions from a number of researchers; a corpus shared with me by Joe Blythe, and published sources on Murrinhpatha. The source of each example is provided – those from my own fieldwork recordings are identified with RN in the source code; those from Joe Blythe's corpus are marked with JB. All examples provided here are from spontaneous natural speech unless marked as elicited.

2 Clausal negation

2.1 Standard negation

Standard negation in Murrinhpatha is expressed with a negative particle before the verb. The verb must also be inflected with the irrealis mood (see below for further discussion). There are a few different negative particles in the corpus, which appear to vary in use amongst speakers, as described below. The most common negator is *mere*, as in (1b) and (2b).[3] When speakers are asked to provide the negative equivalent of a declarative sentence (as in (2a)), this is the negator that is typically used (as in (2b)).

(1) a. *berengunh ngam-rilil*
already 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-write
'I wrote it down already.' (MP-20100917-RN01)

b. ***mere*** *nge-rilil-dha*
NEG 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-write-PST
'I didn't write it down.' (MP-20100917-RN01)

(2) a. *pan-ngi-bat*
3SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).NFUT-1SGO-hit
'He hit me.' (elicited, RN-20090930-002:079)

b. ***mere*** *puy-ngi-bat-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).PST:IRR-1SG.OBJ-hit-PST
'He didn't hit me.' (elicited, MP-20100917-RN01)

[3]Although analysed as a particle, in fast speech *mere* often is reduced to a proclitic *me=*.

Other negative particles are *marda* (3) and *manangka* (4). The choice of negative particle appears to be motivated by sociolinguistic variation, rather than by semantic function: *marda* is reported by Walsh (1976: 215) to be the main clausal negator at the time of his fieldwork, but it is now used by only the oldest speakers; *manangka* is more usually a nominal negator (see §2.3.1) but is being extended to clausal negation as well, in free variation with *mere*. Example (4) is from an elicitation session where the speaker was asked how to say 'he didn't come'. They replied initially with (4a) and then followed with (4b), describing the two options as being equivalent. An example of this use in spontaneous speech is given in (5).

(3) ***marda*** *the ma-bath*
NEG ear 1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-have
'I don't know.' (Street & Street 1989 #marda)

(4) a. ***mere*** *wurri-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).PST:IRR-PST
'He didn't come.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

b. ***manangka*** *wurri-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).PST:IRR-PST
'He didn't come.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

(5) *ba* ***manangka*** *parne-kut-dha-neme,*
oh NEG 3DU.SBJ.BE(4).PST:IRR-collect-PST-PC.M
pibim-wirra-puth-neme
3DU.SBJ.STAND(3).NFUT-3PL.OBL-throw_away-PC.M
'Oh they didn't keep (the gun), they threw it away from them.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2012-06-02_P-D-W)

The negative particle almost always immediately precedes the verb, as in the above examples. However, temporal affixes (6) and adverbials (7) come between *mere* and the verb. There are also a small number of examples in which noun class markers (8) and pronouns (9) come between the negative particle and the verb, but as shown by the (b) examples, this is not obligatory and these elements are regularly found to the left of the negative particle in other examples. There are no examples in the corpus of a complex NP or anything more than a single word coming between the two.

(6) *mere-warda ngena-nham-dha* *ngay-yu*
NEG-TEMP 1SG.SBJ.POKE:RR(21).PST:IRR-fear-PST 1SG-DM
'I wasn't frightened anymore.' (MP-20100916-RN01)

(7) a. *murrinh mere thathpirr nge-riwatha-dha*
CLF:LANG NEG correctly 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-do.properly-PST
'I didn't really say it the right way.' (JB20050703JB02.txt)

b. *mere dangatha ngurri-dha Perrederr-yu*
NEG YET 1SG.SBJ.GO(6).PST:IRR-PST Perrederr-DM
'I've not yet been to Perrederr.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(8) a. *ngay-ka mere murrinh ma-mpa-bath*
1SG-TOP NEG CLF:LANG 1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-2SG.OBL-have
'I don't believe you.' (JB20070728JBvid01c.txt)

b. *murrinh mere puddi-ngarra-riyith-dha*
CLF:LANG NEG 3PL.SBJ.SHOVE(29).PST:IRR-1PL.EXCL.OBL-explain-PST
'They didn't tell us the story.' (MP-20120724-RN01)

(9) a. *awu, mere ngay nge-ngurru-dha*
no NEG 1SG 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-provoke-PST
'No, I did not threaten him.' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 8)

b. *awu, ngay-ka mere nge-rdarrup-dha*
no 1SG-TOP NEG 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-cover-PST
'No, I didn't cover it up.' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 13)

In Miestamo's (2005) terms, these negative clauses in Murrinhpatha show constructional symmetry since the only structural distinction between the negative clause and the corresponding affirmative construction is the presence of the negative marker. However, the verb in negative clauses must always be in irrealis mood – realis tense categories are excluded from being in the scope of the negative particle – and thus we have paradigmatic asymmetry: realis affirmative clauses are negated with the irrealis mood, as can be seen in (1) above. In (1a) the classifier stem is in the (realis) non-future form, whereas in the negative equivalent in (1b) the classifier stem is in the past irrealis form (see Nordlinger & Caudal (2012) for detailed discussion of the tense/aspect/mood system in Murrinhpatha). Thus, Murrinhpatha belongs to the mixed TypeSymAsy category of Miestamo (2013) and the paradigmatic asymmetry is of the A/NonReal subtype (Miestamo 2005; Miestamo 2013), similar to many other northern Australian languages (Miestamo 2007).

In order to mark imperfective aspect, one of a small set of classifier stems is encliticised to the end of the main verb (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012), as shown in (10). The encliticised classifier must also appear in the irrealis form in negative

constructions, showing it to be within the scope of the negative operator. This is shown in the contrast between (10a) and its negative counterpart (10b): in (10b) both the classifier in the main verb (*ka-*) and the encliticised classifier *=ki* must appear in the future irrealis form.

(10) a. *dam-rilil=dim*
3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).NFUT
'He's writing it down.' (elicited, MP-20100917-RN01)

b. *mere ka-rilil=ki*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).FUT:IRR
'He's not writing it down.' (elicited, MP-20100917-RN01)

The tense/aspect/mood system of Murrinhpatha makes a different set of tense distinctions in the realis mood than in the irrealis mood (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012). Since negative clauses are restricted to irrealis mood inflections only, negative clauses make different tense distinctions to their affirmative counterparts. This results in a derived asymmetry (Miestamo 2013) as the asymmetry arises from the properties of the tense/aspect/mood system so cannot be attributed to the negative construction directly, but it is nonetheless a characteristic of negative clauses. The traditional pattern is shown in Table 2, and exemplified below.

Table 2: Murrinhpatha TAM inflection in positive and negative clauses (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="3"></td><td colspan="6">TAM category expressed</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">realis</td><td>irrealis</td></tr>
<tr><td>Past imperfective</td><td>Past perfective</td><td>Present</td><td>Future</td><td>Future</td><td>Past</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">TAM inflection on classifier stem</td><td>Positive polarity</td><td>PST:IPFV</td><td colspan="2">NFUT</td><td>FUT</td><td>FUT:IRR</td><td>PST:IRR</td></tr>
<tr><td>Negative polarity</td><td colspan="2">PST:IRR</td><td colspan="2">FUT:IRR</td><td>PST:IRR</td></tr>
</table>

For example, in affirmative clauses with telic predicates, the non-future tense is used for present and past events (11a, 11b), and the future tense for future events (11c):

(11) a. *dam-rilil=dim*
3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).NFUT
'He's writing it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

b. *dam-rilil*
3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-write
'He wrote it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

c. *pa-rilil-nu*
3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT-write-FUT
'He will write it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

In the irrealis paradigm, however, present and future tense are expressed with the future irrealis while past tense is expressed with the past irrealis. Thus, while (11a) and (11b) involve the same realis tense form of the classifier stem, their negative counterparts use distinct irrealis forms (12a, 12b). Example (11c), on the other hand, which is marked with a distinct form in the affirmative, uses the same irrealis classifier stem form as the present tense (12a) in the negative (12c).

(12) a. *mere ka-rilil=ki*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).FUT:IRR
'He's not writing it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

b. *mere de-rilil-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-write-PST
'He didn't write it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

c. *mere ka-rilil-nu*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-write-FUT
'He won't write it down.' (constructed, for illustration)

Table 2 above presents the traditional system, but in present day Murrinhpatha the distinction between the future irrealis and the past irrealis is being reanalysed, with the future irrealis forms coming to be used as general irrealis forms in all tenses (Mansfield 2014). This means that there is quite a bit of variation in terms of how the past irrealis is expressed both across the community and in the speech of individuals. For example, one speaker in an elicitation session offered the two options in (13) as alternatives meaning 'he didn't come':

(13) a. *mere kurru-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR-PST
'He didn't come.'

b. *mere wurri-dha*
NEG 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).PST:IRR-PST
'He didn't come.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

The same speaker spontaneously provided the two sequential lines in (14) in a narrative – in the first she uses the future irrealis form in a past context, and in the second she switches to the past irrealis:

(14) a. *murrinh mere*
CLF:LANG NEG
***kuddu**-ngarru-riyith-dha-ngime*
3PL.SBJ.SHOVE(29).FUT:IRR-1DU.EXCL.OBL-explain-PST-PC.F
'They didn't explain that story to us.'

b. *murrinh mere **puddi**-ngarra-riyith-dha*
CLF:LANG NEG 3PL.SBJ.SHOVE(29).PST:IRR-1PL.EXCL.OBL-explain-PST
murrinh nhini-yu
CLF:LANG this-DM
'They didn't explain that story to us.' (MP-20120724-RN01)

Nonetheless, despite the variation in the irrealis paradigm, the overall generalization that negative polarity clauses require irrealis verb forms holds across all Murrinhpatha speakers. In the examples in the rest of this paper where the speaker is clearly using the future irrealis form in past irrealis contexts, I gloss it simply as IRR.

In affirmative constructions, the irrealis categories are used to encode counterfactuals, conditional constructions and deontic constructions as in the following:

(15) *ku beg me-art-dha-ka*
CLF:ANIM bag 1SG.SBJ.SNATCH(9).PST:IRR-get-PST-TOP
'I should have brought my bag.' (JB2004-09-12JB04.txt)

(16) *kuma-nhi-manpi mardinhpuy*
3PL.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-2SG.OBJ-help young.girl
'The young girls should help you.' (RN20090930-002:079)

An interesting consequence of the fact that the realis/irrealis distinction is collapsed in negative contexts is that we find ambiguity between standard negative constructions and negative deontic constructions (the negative counterparts of constructions such as (15) and (16)) (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012), since all are marked with the irrealis categories. This is shown in (17) and (18).

(17) *marda the-na-mut-dha palngun*
NEG 2SG.SBJ.POKE(19).PST:IRR-3SG.M.OBL-give-PST woman
a. 'You didn't give him that woman.'
b. 'You shouldn't have given him that woman.' (JB2007-08-27JB04c.txt)

(18) *nukunu-ka mere kani-ngerren murrinh wiye*
3SG.M-TOP NEG 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR-speak CLF:LANG bad
a. 'He doesn't say rude words.'
b. 'He shouldn't say rude words.' (JB2004_08_08JB03b2.txt)

This ambiguity results in a type of polarity reversal whereby on one meaning, e.g. (18a), the interpretation is that the event did not take place (i.e. rude words were not spoken); yet on the other meaning, (18b), the interpretation is that the event *did* take place (i.e. rude words *were* spoken, but the speaker feels they shouldn't have been).[4]

2.2 Negation in non-declaratives

Imperatives are negated in the same way as second person present/future tense declarative clauses, and therefore belong to Type 1 in the typology of van der Auwera & Lejeune (2013). Examples are provided in (19) and (20).[5]

(19) *mere thu-ngi-bat!*
NEG 2SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).FUT:IRR-1SG.OBJ-hit
'Don't hit me!' (MP-20100917-RN01)

(20) *manangka na-rithuk mi pana-yu!*
NEG 2SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-pester CLF:VEG RCGN-DM
'Don't pester him for that food!' (RN20090606-002:077)

[4]As far as I am aware, this has not been discussed in the literature for other languages, although the same ambiguity is found in other northern Australian languages, such as Bininj Kunwok, and can be particularly difficult when interpreting in legal contexts (Murray Garde, pers. comm.).

[5]Note that there is no distinction in the verbal paradigms between future realis and future irrealis for second person. However, given that realis tenses are not permitted in negative declarative clauses, I assume the same is true in negative imperatives, and so treat the verb in these examples as being inflected with the future irrealis.

A stronger deontic meaning, including prohibition, is expressed by adding the *-nukun* 'LEST' suffix (see also §4.6). The *-nukun* suffix can be attached either to the verb (21) or to the negative particle *mere* (22) and adds the implication that something bad or undesirable might happen if the order is not followed.

(21) *mere thu-ngi-rerda-nukun!*
NEG 2SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).FUT:IRR-1SG.OBJ-blame-LEST
'Don't blame me!' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 9)

(22) *da pana-wangu-ka mere-nukun nunna-ngime*
CLF:PLACE RCGN-away-TOP NEG-LEST 2DU.SBJ.TRAVEL(7).FUT:IRR-PC.F
'Don't go near that place.' (MP-20120724-RN01)

Example (22) was then repeated by the speaker as (23), showing the two potential positions for *-nukun*:

(23) *mere nunna-nukun-ngime*
NEG 2DU.SBJ.TRAVEL(7).FUT:IRR-LEST-PC.F
'Don't go (there).' (MP-20120724-RN01)

A special interjection *pirda* 'don't, stop it, leave it' is frequently used in place of, or in conjunction with, negative imperative constructions, especially when admonishing children (24, 25).

(24) *pirda!*
stop
'Don't (touch it), leave it alone!' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-07-338.1)

(25) *pirda, mere numa-rdurt-nukun dedi-yu*
stop NEG 2DU.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-wake_up-LEST father-DM
'Stop it! Don't wake up your father.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-07-69.1)

There are no dedicated hortative constructions in the language distinct from the imperative constructions illustrated above. The corpus also contains no examples of negative interrogative clauses.

2.3 Negation in stative predications

There are two different constructions involved in negating stative (non-verbal) predications. Assuming the categories of Payne (1997: 111ff), equational, proper

inclusion, and attributive constructions are negated similarly to verbal clauses, with the addition of the negative particle *mere* or *manangka*. Existential, locative and possessive non-verbal clauses use a unique construction involving negated noun classifier predicates (see §2.3.3).

2.3.1 Equative and proper inclusion clauses

These clause types are expressed with non-verbal predicates and are negated by placing a negative particle immediately before the predicate. *Mere* is used before pronouns (26, 27), and *manangka* is usually used with nouns (28, 29) (although for some speakers, *mere* is possible with nouns too as in (30)).

(26) a. *mi* *ngay-ka!*
CLF:VEG 1SG-TOP
'That's my food!' (elicited, MP-20100917-RN01)

b. *mi* ***mere*** *ngay pana-yu!*
CLF:VEG NEG 1SG RCGN-DM
'That's not my food!' (elicited, MP-20100917-RN01)

(27) ***mere*** *ngay*
NEG 1SG
'It wasn't me.' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 3)

(28) ***manangka*** *ku* *were ngay*
NEG CLF:ANIM dog 1SG
'That's not my dog.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(29) *kardu* ***manangka*** *garbage bag ngay-yu!*
CLF:HUMAN NEG garbage bag 1SG-DM
'I'm not a garbage bag!' (RN-20180725-004:039)

Examples involving proper inclusion include (30–32):

(30) *kardu* ***mere*** *ku* *teacher pangu-yu*
CLF:HUMAN NEG CLF:ANIM teacher there-DM
'That man's not a teacher.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

(31) ***manangka*** *murrinh*
NEG CLF:LANG
'That's not a word.' (RN-20180724-004:038)

(32) *telephone-gathu, nanthi* ***manangka*** *camera pana-yu!*
telephone-HITHER CLF:THING NEG camera RCGN-DM
'Give me the telephone – that's not a camera!' (RN20120726-003:037)

2.3.2 Attributive clauses

Like equative clauses, these use the standard clausal negators before the attributive predicate, as in (33–35):

(33) *ku were* ***mere*** *ngala pangu-yu*
CLF:ANIM dog NEG big there-DM
'That dog is not big.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

(34) ***manangka*** *dhepdhep-wun-dhay*
NEG food-3PL.OBJ-mouth
'They are never eating.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(35) *kuguk dangatha* ***mere*** *patha-ngi*
wait YET NEG good-1SG.OBJ
'Wait a minute, I don't feel well.' (JB20040808JB03b1.txt)

2.3.3 Negative classifier predicates

The negation of all other stative predications, namely existential, locative and possessive clauses, is expressed using a distinct construction type which involves negative classifier predicates. Negative classifier predicates have not been previously reported in the typological literature on either noun classifiers or negation (e.g. Aikhenvald 2003; Miestamo 2007; Eriksen 2011; Veselinova 2013b).[6] While they have been mentioned in previous descriptive work on Murrinhpatha (e.g. Walsh 1976; Blythe 2009), and briefly in grammatical descriptions of other Daly languages such as Marrithiyel (Green 1989) and Ngan'gityemerri (Reid 2011), they have not been previously discussed in detail.

[6]Sentani (Trans New Guinea) has four classificatory negators used in existential constructions that appear similar to those described here in some respects: *olo* 'no person'; *an* 'no bird, animal'; *ban* 'no animate'; *u* 'no inanimate' (Hartzler 1994, and thanks to Ljuba Veselinova for alerting me to this data). However, Sentani does not appear to have a nominal classifier system from which these negators derive and it's not clear from the description whether they are predicates as we find in Murrinhpatha; they may be more like the negative indefinite pronouns 'nobody, nothing' in English, although it is not possible to determine on the data available to me.

Murrinhpatha has a set of 10 noun classifiers (Walsh 1993), which co-occur with nouns in an NP as in (36) and (37), or can occur alone as general nouns (38). These noun classifiers occur only once in an NP, and do not participate in agreement.

(36) ***kardu*** ***wakal*** *ngurdu-thuk-nu* *ngarra*
CLF:HUMAN child 1SG.SBJ.SHOVE(29).FUT-send-FUT LOC
da-warda
CLF:PLACE-TEMP
'I'll send the little boy home now.' (RN-20070608-002:037)

(37) ***ku*** ***tumtum*** *mam-lerrkperrk*
CLF:ANIM egg 1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).NFUT-destroy
'I crushed the egg in my hands.' (RN-20070608-002:039)

(38) ***kardu*** *mere kurru-lili*
CLF:HUMAN NEG 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR -walk
'That person can't walk.' (RN-20180724-004:038)

As is common in such systems, nouns may combine with different classifiers to reflect different semantic construals. The noun *menek* for example combines with the general inanimate (THING) classifier *nanthi* to describe the ironwood tree (*nanthi menek)*, and with the SPEAR classifier *thamul* to refer to a particular type of spear made from the ironwood tree (*thamul menek*). The full set of nominal classifiers is in (41):

(39)

kardu	'human'	e.g. kardu pule 'old man'
ku	'animate'	e.g. ku lawarnka 'wallaby'
kura	'water'	e.g. kura yelyel 'rain'
thamul	'spear'	e.g. thamul nguni 'short light spear'
thu	'weapon'	e.g. thu paku 'large club'
thungku	'fire'	e.g. thungku thay 'firewood'
mi	'vegetable food'	e.g. mi lawam 'flour
da	'place or time'	e.g. da pemanhay 'sandhill'
murrinh	'language'	e.g. murrinh English 'English'
nanthi	'residue, thing'	e.g. nanthi thelput 'house'

Each of these noun classifiers has a special negative form used in the expression of existential, locative and possessive predications. For most of the classes this is formed by prefixing *ma-* to the noun classifier, but for two classes (*da* and

murrinh) this involves combining the noun classifier with the regular negative particle *manangka*, see (40):

(40)

makardu	'NEG:HUMAN'
maku	'NEG:ANIM'
makura	'NEG:WATER'
mathamul	'NEG:SPEAR'
mathu	'NEG:WEAPON'
mathungku	'NEG:FIRE'
mami	'NEG:VEG'
manangka da	'NEG:PLACE/TIME'
manangka murrinh	'NEG:LANG'
mananthi	'NEG:THING'

Some examples of these negative classifier predicates are given in (41–44). Although they are formally based on the nominal classifiers, these negative forms are in fact predicative, not referential, and cannot function as nominal classifiers themselves. In contexts where the presence of a particular noun is being negated, the regular noun classifier must also be used with the noun, as shown in (42) and (44).

(41) *marra-ka* ***makura****-warda*
NOW-TOP NEG:WATER-TEMP
'Now there's no rain.' (Street 1987: 46)

(42) *ngay-ka* ***mananthi nanthi*** *marluk-yu*
1SG-TOP NEG:THING CLF:THING didgeridoo-DM
'I don't have a didgeridoo.' (Street 1987: 45)

(43) Q: *ngarra John-yu?*
where John-DM
'Where's John?'
A: ***makardu***
NEG:HUMAN
'(He's) not here.' (lit. 'There is no person.') (RN, overheard)

(44) ***ku*** *were-ka* ***maku*** *ngarra da-yu*
CLF:ANIM dog-TOP NEG:ANIM LOC CLF:PLACE-DM
'The dog's not at home.' (elicited, RN-20180724-004:038)

Example (45) provides further evidence for the predicative status of these negative classifiers since it is not possible for them to appear in regular argument positions with a verbal predicate (45b), unlike noun classifiers (45c).

(45) a. *makardu-warda*
NEG:HUMAN-TEMP
'No-one is there.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

b. * *makardu* *kani/kem*
NEG:HUMAN 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR/3SG.SBJ.BE(4).EX
(both options offered to speaker, but rejected and replaced with (45a), MP-20180718-RN01)

c. *kardu* *kem*
CLF:HUMAN 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).EX
'Someone is there.' (constructed, for illustration)

Negative classifier predicates form a distinct negation construction that is used to express negative locative, existential and possessive predications. In this respect Murrinhpatha is consistent with the claims of Veselinova (2013b: 112) who found that 66% of languages in her sample had a distinct construction used in negative existentials with no overlap with the expression of standard negation, and that the most common functions of this special negative construction are negation of existence, possession and location (ibid.: 118).

Examples of negated locative clauses are shown in (46–49). As is clear from these examples, the negative classifier predicates can be used for both specific and general reference.

(46) *Barbara da* ***makardu****-warda*
Barbara CLF:PLACE NEG:HUMAN-TEMP
'Barbara's not here anymore.' (When arriving at the dongas and realising Barbara had gone back to Melbourne) (RN20090606-002:075)

(47) *kardu* *wakal* ***makardu****-ya* *ngarra truck-yu*
CLF:HUMAN small NEG:HUMAN-DM LOC truck-DM
'The child is not in the truck.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(48) *ngathan ngay-ka Daly River wardarra, kardu* ***makardu****-warda*
brother 1SG-TOP Daly River already CLF:HUMAN NEG:HUMAN-TEMP
Darwin-kathu-yu
Darwin-HITHER-DM
'My brother is in Daly River already, he's not in Darwin anymore (heading this way).' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(49) *ku were-ka* ***maku*** *ngarra da-yu*
CLF:ANIM dog-TOP NEG:ANIM home-DM
'The dog's not at home.' (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

The PLACE/TIME classifier *da* (also the LANGUAGE classifier *murrinh*) doesn't have a synthetic negative form, but is just negated with the regular NP negator *manangka*, as shown in (50):

(50) *manangka da dangatha*
NEG CLF:PLACE YET
'It wasn't there at the time.' (JB20050705JB01.txt:107)

It can therefore be hard to determine whether these constructions are negative predicate constructions, such as those above, or simple NP negation as illustrated in §2.3.1 above. However, examples such as (51) suggest that *manangka da* functions predicatively like the other synthetic negative classifier predicates, since it co-occurs with the regular noun classifier when a particular place is being discussed:

(51) *… ngarra da purtek ngala kanhi-ka* ***da*** ***manangka***
REL CLF:PLACE ground big this-TOP CLF:PLACE NEG
da *dangatha*
CLF:PLACE yet
'Before the world began…' (lit. 'When this entire place was not a place yet') (Mansfield et al. 2019, 01-Christ-Comes-to-the-World)

Negative classifier predicates are also the standard way to encode negative existence. Examples include (52–55):

(52) *bere ku ngalmungku-ka* ***maku***
SO CLF:ANIM red.kangaroo-TOP NEG:ANIM
'Then the kangaroo was gone.' (RN Kanamkek-Stanner.wav)

(53) *perrkenku* ***makardu****-warda*
two NEG:HUMAN-TEMP
'(and) the two who have passed away now' (MP-20120724-RN01)

(54) ***makardu****-warda*
NEG:HUMAN-TEMP
'No-one is around.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(55) Q: *mi tham-rimut?*
CLF:VEG 2SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-leave.over
'Did you leave some (food)?'
A: *awu mi ngam-rigerdek* ***mami****-warda*
no CLF:VEG 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-finish NEG:VEG-TEMP
'No, I finished it all. There's nothing left.' (MP-20110810-RN01)

In (56), the existence of the feet is not actually being negated, but rather the awareness of them by the protagonists:

(56) *nanthi me* ***mananthi*** *mere pube-me-ngkardu-dha*
CLF:THING foot NEG:THING NEG 3DU.SBJ.SEE(13).PST:IRR-foot-see-PST
'They didn't see (Thiniminh's) feet (sticking out from under the paperbark).' (RN Kanamkek-Stanner.wav)

Negative actions expressed by non-verbal clauses are also a type of negated existential predicate (57–58):

(57) ***makura****-wun-thay*
NEG:WATER-3PL.OBJ-mouth
'No drinking, they don't drink.' (lit. 'Their mouths have no water.') (RN, written on sign in the Wadeye community)

(58) *da four month kaka-yu* ***kura*** ***makura***
CLF:TIME four month uncle-DM CLF:WATER NEG:WATER
'It's nearly four months that your uncle hasn't been drinking.' (lit. 'It's four months uncle has no water.') (JB20090707JBvid04.wav)

However, when the nominal classifier is itself used as predicate (59), the regular nominal negator must be used instead, as it is with other nominal predicates (see (31) and (32) above, for example):

(59) *ngankungintha kardu* ***manangka kura*** ***(*makura)***
1DU.EXCL.NSIB CLF:HUMAN NEG drunk
'The two of us weren't drunk.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-01-29_AMN_NAATI)

Possessive clauses are also negated with negative classifier predicate constructions as illustrated in (60–65). The regular NP negator is not possible in these constructions as shown by (60b).

(60) a. *ngay-ka ku were* ***maku***
1SG-TOP CLF:ANIM dog NEG:ANIM
'I don't have a dog.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

b. * *ngay-ka manangka ku were*
1SG-TOP NEG CLF:ANIM dog
Attempted: 'I don't have a dog.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(61) *ngay-ka* ***maku*** *ku tumtum*
1SG-TOP NEG:ANIM CLF:ANIM egg
'I don't have any eggs.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(62) *ngay-ka kardu wakal* ***makardu***
1SG-TOP CLF:HUMAN child NEG:HUMAN
'I don't have any children.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(63) *kardu wakal dimu* ***mananthi***
CLF:HUMAN child tooth NEG:THING
'The baby's got no teeth.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(64) *ngay-ka mi peka* ***mami***
1SG-TOP CLF:VEG tobacco NEG:VEG
'I don't have any tobacco.' (RN20130702-003:054)

(65) *nukunu-ka the kanthin-nan ngarra mi* ***mami***
3SG.M-TOP ear 3SG.SBJ.HAVE(22).NFUT-2PL.OBJ REL CLF:VEG NEG:VEG
narnam i nanthi ***mananthi*** *narnam*
2PL.SBJ.BE(4).NFUT and CLF:THING NEG:THING 2PL.SBJ.BE(4).NFUT
'and God knows that you need things (that you don't have).' (lit. 'He knows about you that you are 'food no food' and you are 'thing no-thing'') (RN, Mt6:24-34-009)

Affirmative possessive constructions of this type are very rare in the corpus, but when elicited are generally expressed with a verbal construction as in (66) and (67). Affirmative existential constructions also use a verbal construction, as in (68) repeated from above. We therefore have another type of structural asymmetry here where the affirmative construction involves a construction with a verbal predicate while the negative equivalent is expressed using a negative classifier predicate.

(66) *nigunu-ka dimu kanthin*
3SG.M-TOP tooth 3SG.SBJ.HAVE(22).NFUT
'He (the baby) has teeth.' (elicited, Bill Forshaw, pers. comm.)

(67) *nigunu-ka ngathan numi kanthin*
3SG.M-TOP brother one 3SG.SBJ.HAVE(22).NFUT
'He has one brother.' (elicited, Bill Forshaw, pers. comm.)

(68) *kardu kem*
CLF:HUMAN 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).EX
'Someone is there.' (constructed, for illustration)

The existence of negative classifier predicates in Murrinhpatha is consistent with Veselinova's (2013b) claim that negative existence is a separate functional domain, distinct from both standard negation and affirmative existence. However, negative classifier predicates in Murrinhpatha further expand the typology of negative existentials by showing that negative existential strategies can develop from nominal classifiers, something which has not been reported before in typological literature (Eriksen 2011; Veselinova 2013b).

2.4 Negation in non-main clauses

Murrinhpatha doesn't have non-finite verbal clauses; any non-main verbal clauses have the same structure as main clauses, with the same negation strategies. The negative particle can have scope over just the higher (69) or lower (70) clause; the scope of the negative particle is clearly indicated by irrealis marking on the verb (or lack thereof).

(69) ***mere the ma-bath*** *ngarra-kama*
NEG ear 1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-have where-MAYBE
parnam
3PL.SBJ.BE(4).NFUT
'I don't know where they are.' (RN20091006-002:121)

(70) *murrinh nukunu wurran-ngerren* ***mere***
CLF:LANG 3SG.M 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT-speak NEG
bi-ma-yepup
1SG.SBJ.LISTEN(16).FUT:IRR-APPL-hear
'He's talking a language I can't understand.' (JB20040624JB01.txt)

Embedded non-verbal clauses are negated with negative classifier predicates (§2.3.3), as shown in (71):

(71) *bam-ngkardu* ***nanthi*** ***me*** ***boot mananthi****,*
1SG.SBJ.SEE(13).NFUT-see CLF:THING foot boot NEG:THING
nungam-winharart-yu
3SG.SBJ.FOOT(7).NFUT-run-DM
'I saw him running without boots.' (lit. 'I saw him without boots, running.') (MP-20180718-RN01)

2.5 Negative lexicalizations

Murrinhpatha has a lexicalized interjection *pirda* 'don't, stop it, leave it' (exemplified in §2.2 and (72)) , a number of lexical stems that encode a negated event as part of their inherent semantics (73–74) and an idiomatic construction meaning 'don't want, don't like' (76–78). The meanings of many of these negative lexicalizations are consistent with the cross-linguistic tendencies identified by Veselinova (2013a), especially the lexicalized construction meaning 'don't want, don't like', which her study found to be very commonly lexicalized across languages in her sample.

(72) *pirda!*
stop
'Don't (touch it), leave it alone!' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-07-338.1)

Other negative lexicalizations arise from the meanings of specific lexical stems, which encode a negated state or event as part of their semantics, such as *-ngkapi* 'not recognize' (73), and *-biye* 'not realise' (74). While these are semantically negative, they are not grammatically negative constructions as shown by the fact that they occur inflected with realis tense categories (73a, 74), and can themselves be negated (in which case they are inflected with irrealis mood) as in (73b).

(73) a. *wurdam-**ngkapi***
3SG.SBJ.SHOVE:RR(30).NFUT-not.recognize
'He didn't recognize them.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-07-21 210.1)

b. *mere-warda kurdi-nhi-**ngkapi***
NEG-TEMP 3SG.SBJ.SHOVE:RR(30).FUT:IRR-2SG.OBJ-not.recognize
'So he won't treat you like a stranger.' (lit. 'So he won't not recognize you.') (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-07-21 168.1)

(74) *kanam-part=wurran* *nukunu-ka puy*
3SG.SBJ.BE(4).NFUT-leave=3SG.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT 3SG.M-TOP keep.going
*me-nu-the-**biye**=wurrini*
3SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).PST:IPFV-RR-ear-not.realise=3SG.SBJ.GO(6).PST:IPFV
yileyile-yu
father-DM
'She left him and kept going, but her father didn't realise.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, CS1-017-A_07)

There is also an idiomatic construction for 'don't want' that is different to the construction used to express the positive 'want'. While the expression for 'want' is an idiom which combines the body part noun *marda* 'belly' with the verb meaning 'to get/grab' (75), the meaning 'don't want' is formed with the negated clause 'not be happy' (76–77). This negated clause makes use of a regular negated construction and so this is not a negative lexicalization in the strict sense, however it is included here as it is lexicalized as the idiomatic way to encode 'not want'.

(75) *mi-nu* ***marda mangan-art**=dim*
CLF:VEG-DAT belly 3SG.SBJ.SNATCH(9).NFUT-get=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).NFUT
'She wants some food.' (elicited, RN-20180724-004:038)

(76) ***manangka le** **kani*** *mi* *dhepdhep*
NEG happy 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR CLF:VEG food
'She doesn't want any food.' (lit. 'She isn't happy food-wise.' (elicited, RN-20180724-004:038)

(77) ***mere le** **ngurru**,* *durdu*
NEG happy 1SG.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR breathless
ma-marda-nukun=ngurru
1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-belly-LEST=1SG.SBJ.GO(6).FUT
'I don't want to go, I might get breathless.' (lit. 'I won't go happy') (JB20040912JB04.txt)

This construction is also used for 'don't like' (78):

(78) ***mere le** **ngani-na***
NEG happy 1SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR-3SG.M.OBL
'I don't like him.' (lit. 'I am not happy about him.') (JB20110901_B_video_GYHM100_01)

2.6 Other clausal negation constructions

2.6.1 *wurda* 'no' as a negative predicate

In some examples the negative word *wurda* 'no, nothing' (see §3.1) is used as a negative predicate in a verbless clause to indicate that something won't, can't or didn't happen, see (79–80):

(79) *mi peka-ka* ***wurda-wa*** *ngarra prison-yu*
CLF:VEG tobacco-TOP NO-EMPH LOC prison-DM
'Tobacco is banned in prison.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2015-01-29_AMN_NAATI)

(80) *kardu kigay ngamere-nimin pumpanka-pek-neme*
CLF:HUMAN youth few-OTHER 3DU.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT-destroy-PC.M
nanthi truck-yu, mu nhinhi-ka ***wurda-wa***
CLF:THING truck-DM BUT 2SG-TOP NO-EMPH
'The other boys destroyed the truck, but you didn't.' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 1)

3 Non-clausal negation

3.1 Negative replies

In appropriate contexts, negative replies to polar questions can be expressed with the negative classifier predicates discussed in §2.3.3. For example, a negative response to a question like 'Did you catch any fish?' might be *maku* 'NEG:ANIM'; or in response to the question 'Is anyone inside the house' a negative reply might be *makardu* 'NEG:HUMAN'. It is also possible to use one of two negative words: *wurda* and *awu*.

Wurda is the more general negative word, translating as 'no, nothing'. It can be used as an interjection to either reinforce a negative statement (81), answer a question (82, 83), or as a negative tag question (84) (see also §2.6.1):

(81) *manangka lurruth kardu,* ***wurda***
NEG strong CLF:HUMAN NO
'He's not a strong man, no.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 1981_CS1-03A_GM)

(82) Q: 'Do you light fires there?'
A: ***wurda***, *mere*
no NEG
nga-rdudrurt=ngarni *da*
1PL.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-light.fires=1PL.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR CLF:PLACE
pangu-yu
there-DM
'No, we don't light fires there.' (MP-20091008-RN01)

(83) Q: 'Will you be taking me home?'
A: *ngay-ka* ***wurda-wa***
1SG-TOP no-EMPH
'Not me (someone else will).' (MP-20100920-RN01)

(84) *kura* *kanhi nukunu wurran=dim* *mu*
CLF:WATER here 3SG.M 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).NFUT OR
wurda*?*
no
'Does he go through this water here or not?' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2012-06-20_landing_29)

Awu is an interjection and is always initial in the clause. While it is a negative interjection, it has a different pragmatic force to *wurda* and is often used in situations where the utterance is considered to be counter to expectations in some way.

It can be used to signal disagreement with a prior suggestion or statement, as in (85):

(85) A: *kura* *ti* *kanhi-ka pa-winhipak-warda*
CLF:WATER tea here-TOP 1INCL.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-spill-TEMP
'Let's tip out this tea.'
B: ***awu****, kura* *pi-gurdugurduk-ngime*
no CLF:WATER 1INCL.SBJ.SIT(1).FUT:IRR-drink-PC.F
'No, let's drink it.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 20110828_JB_video)

In some examples it is used to mark contrast with a preceding statement, rather than negation. In the example in (86), two characters in a story are talking about where they want to go; *awu* is used to contrast with the preceding utterance, rather than to negate or disagree with its content.

(86) *nukunu-ka mem-nu* *Kanamkek-yu*
3SG.M-TOP 3SG.SBJ.HANDS:RR(10).NFUT-RR Kanamkek-DM
'Kanamkek said to himself,

"ngay-ka nga-wintigat-nu *kanhi-ngu"*
1SG-TOP 1SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT-descend-FUT here-WAY
"I'll go down (to the water) this way."

Thinaminh-ka mam
Thinaminh-TOP 3SG.SBJ.SAY/DO(34).NFUT
Thinaminh said,

*"**awu** ngay-ka ngi-mardawith-nu* *kanhi-ngu, palyirr"*
no 1SG-TOP 1SG.SBJ.SIT(1).FUT-ascend-FUT here-WAY hill
"No, I'm going up this way, to the hills."' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2000-11-10_LKLM)

Awu is also used in corrections, including self-corrections (87):

(87) *piguna-ka pumpanka* *[…] **awu**! mi* *bamngutut*
3DU.SIB-TOP 3DU.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT no CLF:VEG boab
kuba-birr=kuru
3PL.SBJ.BASH(14).FUT:IRR-plant=3PL.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR
'The sisters were going […] no! they were all going to plant boab fruit.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 2000-11-319.1)

In some examples *awu* is used in response to a content question. In these examples it may be used to deny the implicature generated by the question. In (88), for example, B's use of *awu* denies the implicature that there is anything particularly wrong.

(88) A: *thangkudha yawu?*
what.from HEY
'What's wrong?'

B: ***awu**, mi* *peka* *lurruth ngala-wa*
no CLF:VEG tobacco strong big-EMPH
'*Awu*, the tobacco is really strong.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 20171403_AN)

The two negative words can combine to mean 'definitely not'. In this case, they are always in the order *awu wurda* (89):

(89) *"nhinhi-ka kale ngay?" mam*
2SG-TOP mother 1SG 3SG.SBJ.SAY/DO(34).NFUT
'"Are you my mother?" he said.

*"**awu wurda**!" mam ku ngurlmirl-yu*
no no 3SG.SBJ.SAY/DO(34).NFUT CLF:ANIM fish-DM
"No, definitely not!" said the fish.

"ngay-ka ku ngurlmirl-wa!"
1SG-TOP CLF:ANIM fish-EMPH
"I'm a fish!"' (*Are you my mother?* children's book)

3.2 Negative indefinites and quantifiers

There is a set of indefinite/interrogative pronouns including *nangkarl* 'someone, who' (90), *ngarra* 'sometime/somewhere, when/where' (91) and *thangku* 'something, what' (92). When functioning as indefinites these are often found co-occurring with the epistemic suffix *-kama* 'MAYBE' as in (90).

(90) ***nangkarl**-kama pan-nga-bat*
who-MAYBE 3SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).NFUT-1SG.OBL-hit
'Someone called me (on the phone).' (MP-20091008-RN01)

(91) *da pana **ngarra** purru-lili*
CLF:PLACE RCGN where 1INCL.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT-walk
'We just go walk somewhere.' (MP-20091008-RN01)

(92) *ku balli-ya ngarde-wat-ngime-ya ku*
CLF:ANIM mud.crab-DM 1DU.EXCL.SBJ.BE(4).PST:IPFV-GO-PC.F-DM CLF:ANIM
***thangku**-wu pana ngurlmirl*
what-EMPH RCGN fish
'We would go for crabs, and, something else, fish.' (MP-20120724-RN01)

These indefinite pronouns can be negated with the clausal negator *mere*, as with all other pronouns (93):

(93) ***mere thangku** deyida*
NEG what again
'nothing else' (20110730_JB_video_GYHM100_04)

Indefinite pronouns combine with standard clausal negation in a verbal clause to form their negated versions, thus Murrinhpatha belongs to Kahrel's (1996) Type 1 in this respect. Note that while standard clausal negation is used, in these constructions the indefinite pronoun always immediately follows the negative particle, which is not the usual position for nominal arguments in standard negation. Nonetheless, the fact that the verb must appear in the irrealis mood, as with regular clausal negation, shows that the negative marker *mere* has scope over the whole clause, not just the indefinite pronoun (94–96).

(94) ***mere thangku***
NEG what
ku-ngi-mathak=kani
3SG.SBJ.SLASH(23).FUT:IRR-1SG.OBJ-have.things=3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR
'I've got nothing (in my pockets).' (MP-20091001-RN01)

(95) ***mere nangkarl****-warda kani*
NEG who-TEMP 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR
'No-one is living there.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(96) ***mere nangkarl*** *be-rdurt-dha*
NEG who 1SG.SBJ.BASH(14).PST:IRR-find-PST
'I didn't see (find) anyone (there).' (MP-20180718-RN01)

Mere ngarra appears to have been extended into other negative functions as well, including meanings such as 'not ever, never, can't' (97–99):

(97) *da kura* ***mere ngarra*** *karni-yel da*
CLF:TIME CLF:WATER NEG what 3SG.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR-rain CLF:TIME
mirrangan-wa kanhi-yu
dry.season-EMPH here-DM
'It never rains in the dry season (which is now).' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(98) *mu* ***manangka ngarra*** *fix kama-na*
BUT NEG what fix 3SG.SBJ.DO(34).FUT:IRR-3SG.M.OBL
'but (the doctor) can't fix him' (RN, overheard)

(99) ***mere ngarra*** *pani-la*
NEG what 1INCL.SBJ.BE(4).FUT:IRR-climb
'We can't climb (that hill).' (20110825_JB_video_GYHM100_01)

In some examples, *mere ngarra* seems to express lack of volition, rather than meaning 'never, can't'. In (100) and (101) the use of *mere ngarra* indicates a choice on the part of the speaker not to undertake the actions described.

(100) ***mere ngarra*** *me-watha-dha,* *le wiye*
NEG what 1SG.HANDS(8).PST:IRR-make-PST tired
'I didn't make (any tea), (I'm) tired.' (MP-20100920-RN01)

(101) ***mere ngarra*** *ngurru*
NEG what 1SG.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR
'I'm not going.' (RN-20180725-004:038)

Example (102) shows nicely the interaction of the different negative construction types. Speaker A uses an indefinite pronoun to ask a question. In their response, speaker B answers first with the negative word *wurda* (§3.1), then a negative existential construction using a negative classifier predicate (§2.3.3), and then reiterates with the use of a negative indefinite construction in which the indefinite pronoun *nangkarl* is used as an argument NP in the negated verbal clause.

(102) Q: *kardu* *nangkarl-ngadha* *bam-nhi-ngkardu?*
CLF:HUMAN who-STILL 3SG.SBJ.SEE(13).NFUT-2SG.OBJ-see
'Did someone come to see you?'

A: ***wurda, makardu.*** ***mere nangkarl***
no NEG:HUMAN NEG who
be-ngi-ngkardu-dha
3SG.SBJ.SEE(13).PST:IRR-1SG.OBJ-see-PST
'No, no-one. No-one came to see me.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

3.3 Negative derivation and case marking

In general, the meaning of absence at the lexical level – the equivalent to English 'without' – is expressed as a non-verbal subordinate clause with a negative classifier predicate as discussed in §2.3.3, §2.4 and illustrated in (103–104). The use of negative classifier predicates in this way is consistent with Veselinova's (2013b) finding that negative existential constructions commonly also have privative functions cross-linguistically.

(103) *kardu nungam-pinharart nanthi me boot* ***mananthi***
CLF:HUMAN 3SG.SBJ.FOOT(7).NFUT-run CLF:THING foot boot NEG:THING
'Someone's running without shoes.' (lit. 'A person is running, (s/he is) without shoes') (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

(104) *bam-ngkardu nanthi me boot* ***mananthi,***
1SG.SBJ.SEE(13).NFUT-see CLF:THING foot boot NEG:THING
nungam-winharart-yu
3SG.SBJ.FOOT(7).NFUT-run-DM
'I saw him running without boots.' (lit. 'I saw him, (he was) without boots, he was running.') (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

The NP negator *manangka* is also possible in this function, for some speakers (105–106). Note that in these constructions it never combines with a nominal classifier relating to the negated element:

(105) ***manangka*** *me boot parde-wilili-dha-neme*
NEG foot boot 3DU.SBJ.BE(4).PST:IPFV-WALK-PST-PC.M
'They walked without any shoes.' (Mansfield et al. 2019, 20152-07-13_CW_verb-suffixes)

(106) *kardu* ***manangka*** *pemarr-we*
CLF:HUMAN NEG hair-head
'person without head hair' (Walsh 1976: 182)

There is one idiomatic construction in which an associative suffix *-ma* is suffixed to the negative classifier predicate *makardu* to indicate absence of a wife or girlfriend (107–108). This construction is not possible without the *-ma* as shown in (109).

(107) *kardu palngun* ***makardu-ma***
CLF:HUMAN woman NEG:HUMAN-ASSOC
'single man' (lit. 'person without a woman') (MP-20180718-RN01)

(108) *palngun* ***makardu-ngi-ma***
woman NEG:HUMAN-1SG.OBJ-ASSOC
'I've got no girlfriend/wife.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

(109) * *palngun makardu*
woman NEG:HUMAN
'He's got no girlfriend/wife.' (MP-20180718-RN01)

In other contexts the nominal suffix *-ma* functions as a comitative (Walsh 1976: 183) or associative, as in (110) and (111):

(110) *kardu* *thamul-ma*
CLF:HUMAN spear-ASSOC
'a person habitually associated with spears' (Walsh 1976: 187)

(111) *batbat-ngi-ma*
right.hand-1SG.OBJ-ASSOC
'I'm right-handed.' (Mansfield 2019: 166)

The fact that the construction in (107) is idiomatic is shown by the fact that the comitative/associative *-ma* is not possible in other contexts, such as when talking about a woman without a husband. In this case the nominal classifier predicate is not possible (cf. (113) with (107) above), and the regular NP negator must be used instead, as in (112).

(112) *kardu* *manangka nugalin*
CLF:HUMAN NEG husband
'single woman' (lit. 'person without a husband') (elicited, MP-20180718-RN01)

(113) * *kardu* *nugalin* *makardu-ma*
CLF:HUMAN husband NEG:HUMAN-ASSOC
Attempted: 'single woman' (checked in elicitation, rejected and replaced with (112), MP-20180718-RN01)

4 Other aspects of negation

4.1 The scope of negation

The negative particle generally has scope over the entire clause, reflected in the presence of irrealis mood marking on the verb (§2.1). The serialised classifier stem which marks imperfective aspect (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012) must also appear in the irrealis form in negative constructions, showing it to be within the scope of the negative operator (114).

(114) a. ***dam****-rilil=****dim***
3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).NFUT-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).NFUT
'He's writing it down.' (MP-20100917-RN01)

b. *mere* ***ka****-rilil=****ki***
NEG 3SG.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-write=3SG.SBJ.SIT(1).FUT:IRR
'He's not writing it down.' (MP-20100917-RN01)

As discussed in §2.4, in complex sentences the negative particle can have scope over just the higher or lower clause, with the relevant verb inflecting for irrealis mood, as shown in (115–116) (repeated from above).

(115) ***mere the ma-bath*** *ngarra-kama*
NEG ear 1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-have where-MAYBE
parnam
3PL.SBJ.BE(3).NFUT
'I don't know where they are.' (RN20091006-002:121)

(116) *murrinh nukunu wurran-ngerren* ***mere***
CLF:LANG 3SG.M 3SG.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT-speak NEG
bi-ma-yepup
1SG.SBJ.LISTEN(16).FUT:IRR-APPL-hear
'He's talking a language I can't understand.' (JB20040624JB01.txt)

4.2 Negative polarity

As far as I have been able to determine, there are no negative polarity items in Murrinhpatha. See §3.2 for a discussion of indefinite pronouns and their interaction with negative particles.

4.3 Marking of NPs in the scope of negation

Case marking on NPs in Murrinhpatha is very limited and mostly not obligatory (see Nordlinger 2015; Mansfield 2019). There is no special marking of NPs within the scope of negation, although the language does have special negative classifier predicates which are used in existential, locative and possessive constructions as discussed in §2.3.3.

4.4 Reinforcing negation

The negative particle *mere* can be inflected with the 'LEST' suffix *-nukun* to emphasise the undesirability of the negated action. This construction is common in imperatives (see §2.2), but can be found in declarative clauses too, as in (117–118).

(117) *nekineme-ka* ***mere-nukun***
1PC.M.INCL-TOP NEG-LEST
pa-yetmut-neme=purru
1INCL.SBJ.POKE(19).FUT:IRR-refuse-PC.M=1INCL.SBJ.GO(6).FUT:IRR
'We won't refuse him.' (JB20100827_JB_video_02_modified.wav)

(118) *da* *pana-wangu-ka* ***mere-nukun***
CLF:PLACE RCGN-AWAY-TOP NEG-LEST
nunna-ngime
2DU.SBJ.TRAVEL(7).FUT:IRR-PC.F
'Don't you ever go near that place (warning children).'
(MP-20120724-RN01)

Reinforced negation is also achieved through combining the two negative words *awu wurda* to mean 'definitely not', as discussed in §3.1, and shown in (119) (repeated from above):

(119) *"nhinhi-ka kale* *ngay?" mam*
2SG-TOP mother 1SG 3SG.SBJ.SAY/DO(34).NFUT
'"Are you my mother?" he said.

"awu wurda!" *mam* *ku* *ngurlmirl-yu*
no no 3SG.SBJ.SAY/DO(34).NFUT CLF:ANIM fish-DM
"No, definitely not!" said the fish.

"ngay-ka ku *ngurlmirl-wa!"*
1SG-TOP CLF:ANIM fish-EMPH
"I'm a fish!"' (*Are you my mother?* children's book)

4.5 Negation, coordination and complex clauses

There are no special negative coordinators in the current Murrinhpatha corpus, and no examples where a negator has scope over a coordinated construction. §2.4 provides examples showing the independent negation of the higher and lower clauses in complex sentences. In the following examples we see that *wurda* 'no, nothing' can be used to negate an ellipsed negative declarative in contrastive 'X but didn't' clauses (120), or those with contrastive subjects (121).

(120) *me-watha-dha-warda* *mu* ***wurda***
1SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).PST:IRR-make-PST-TEMP BUT no
'I tried to make (some tea) but didn't. (MP-20100920-RN01)

(121) *kardu kigay ngamere-nimin pumpanka-pek-neme*
CLF:HUMAN youth few-OTHER 3DU.SBJ.GO(6).NFUT-destroy-PC.M
nanthi truck-yu, mu nhinhi-ka ***wurda-wa***
CLF:THING truck-DM BUT 2SG-TOP NO-EMPH
'The other boys destroyed the truck, but you didn't.' (Ford & McCormack 2011: 1)

4.6 Miscellaneous aspects of negation

Murrinhpatha also has an apprehensive, or 'lest' construction, which is encoded with the suffix *-nukun* 'lest' added to a verb inflected with the future irrealis. These constructions are not negative constructions, *per se*, but are related to the domain of negation in that they express undesirable consequences that the speaker believes should be avoided. These constructions are different to those discussed in §2.1–§2.3 since they don't include a negative particle of any kind. Some examples are given in (122–124):

(122) ***pubu****-wath-****nukun***
1INCL.SBJ.17.FUT:IRR-fall-LEST
'We might fall down.' (20110825_JB_video_GHYM100_01)

(123) ***thirra****-pe-warda*
2SG.SBJ.STAND(3).FUT:IRR-care.for-TEMP
ma*-nhi-ngkangath-****nukun***
3SG.SBJ.HANDS(8).FUT:IRR-2SG.OBJ-hide-LEST
'Look after her, she might get lost.' (MP-20100916-RN01)

(124) ***ke****-nhi-bath-****nukun****!*
3SG.SBJ.POKE:RR(21).FUT:IRR-2SG.OBJ-cook-LEST
'It might burn you!' (RN20070608-002:035)

It is possible to add *-nukun* to an NP to create a non-verbal clause expressing an undesirable consequence. The NP+*nukun* encodes the fact that something bad might happen related to the NP. The hearer draws on pragmatics and context to interpret the action that is being negated or cautioned against. These constructions may be imperative (125) or declarative (126–128):

(125) *mange-nukun!*
hand-LEST
'Look out for your hand (in the car door)! (e.g. it might get jammed)' (RN, overheard)

(126) *jection-nukun!*
injection-LEST
'[I'm not coming because] (she) might (give me) an injection!' (RN, overheard)

(127) *ku tharnkin-nukun*
CLF:ANIM king_brown_snake-LEST
'A King Brown might (come out after us … and we'll have to get away from it).' (JB20040808JB03b1.txt)

(128) *ngay-ka wakay mayern-nukun-warda Nungalinya*
1SG-TOP finish track-LEST-TEMP place_name
'My (money) might all get used up on the trip to Nungalinya.' (JB20090707JBvid04.wav)

5 Summary

The discussion above covers the key aspects of negation and negative construction types in Murrinhpatha, based on our current knowledge about the language. The set of negative constructions and their functions are summarized in Table 3. Murrinhpatha contributes to our typologies of negation in a number of ways, most notably in the existence of negative classifier predicates, which have not previously been described for any language in the typological literature (§2.3.3).

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Table 3: Murrinhpatha negative constructions and their functions

Negation strategy	Function
mere: negativeparticle	Standard negation, verbs marked with irrealis mood (§2.1)
	Negative imperatives (§2.2)
	Negating pronouns in equative and proper inclusion verbless clauses (§2.3.1)
	Negative attributive clauses (§2.3.2)
manangka: negative particle	Standard negation, verbs marked with irrealis mood (§2.1)
	Negative imperatives (§2.2)
	Negating nouns in equative and proper inclusion verbless clauses (§2.3.1)
	Negative attributive clauses (§2.3.2)
mere 'NEG' + *-nukun* 'LEST' suffix	Emphatic negation (§4.4)
	prohibition (§2.2)
pirda: interjection	'Don't!, Stop it!' (§2.2)
negative classifier predicates	Negating existential, locative, possessive clauses (§2.3.3)
mere/ manangka 'NEG' + *ngarra* 'what'	'never, can't' (§3.2)
-nukun 'LEST'	Encoding warnings, undesirable events, admonitives (§4.6)
wurda: negative word, 'no'	Negative replies (§3.1)
	Negative predicate in verbless clauses (§2.6.1)
awu: negative word, 'no'	Negative replies, negation of expectation (§3.1)

Abbreviations

1	first person	M	masculine
2	second person	NEG	negative
3	third person	NFUT	non-future
ANIM	animate	NSIB	non-siblings
APPL	applicative	O	object
ASSOC	associative	OBL	oblique
CLF	classifier	PC	paucal
DAT	dative	PL	plural
DM	discourse	PST	past
DU	dual	RCGN	recognitional
EMPH	emphatic		demonstrative
EXCL	exclusive	REL	relativizer
EX	existential	RR	reflexive/reciprocal
F	feminine	S	subject
FUT	future	SG	singular
INCL	inclusive	SIB	siblings
IPFV	imperfective	TEMP	temporal
IRR	irrealis	TOP	topic
LANG	language	VEG	vegetable
LOC	locative		

Classifier stems are glossed with an indicative semantic gloss where possible (provided in small caps) and a number which corresponds to the traditional description of these elements (e.g. Blythe et al. 2007). Examples are provided in morphemic transcription.

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