

Hypothetical Constructions

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Introduction:

The term "condition" is used in linguistics to refer to any facts which need to be taken into account in evaluating a theory of grammar or individual analysis e.g. such conditions as external [Adequacy, Generality, Simplicity]. So the direct condition may be either an "Open condition" or a "Hypothetical condition". While "conditional" means a term used in grammatical description to refer to clauses whose semantic role is the expression of hypotheses or conditions. In English, these are introduced by "if", "Unless" and a few other conditions. The traditional grammatical notion of conditional tense [would, should] is usually interpreted in terms of aspectual or modal verb form in English analysis.

The purposes of this paper is to discuss difficulties learners of English face in the use of "if clauses" i.e. the unreal case or the hypothetical condition. In fact, they do not know how to handle the second case [hypothetical condition]. So the purpose here is to find out the main meaning of this type. Moreover, in sentence of hypothetical conditions, the past subjunctive is used in 'if clause' and "should and would + the infinitive" are used in the main clause. Sentences of this type may refer to **Present, Past and Future time.**

This Research tends to deal with "the unreal case". It will be noticed that in type two [Unreal Case] and three (Rejected past) on the conditional, the past or past perfect tense is used when we suppose what is impossible. These are really subjunctives, but seeming that "were" is the only visible remains of this form that occurs with any frequency. The students needn't be asked to differentiate between past subjunctive and past indicative. The past tense is used for something unreal or wished for (now) and the past perfect when the supposition or wish was all in the past.

Types of Conditional Clauses:

We can say that there are three types of conditional sentences based on three ways of **Combining tenses in the if-clause** and main clause, these are:

- 1- Future.
- 2- Improbable [unreal].
- 3- Unfulfilled past.

There is another way to look at conditionals is that to consider these conditional sentences in terms of:

- Open or real condition: it is called open because the events described are real possibility or in the future.
- Hypothetical or rejected condition: it is called so because condition is "rejected" as unreal now [but in some cases they could happen below.
- Open conditional sentences include:
 - a. Future possibilities:
 - If the trees annoy her, I'll cut them down.
 - b. Conditions [present or past time] where one event habitually follows another:
 - If he is / was working, always smokes / smoked.
 - c. Conditions where a deduction is made:
 - If he can do that, he can do anything.
 - d. logical gap: sentences where there is a logical gap between the condition and the main clause:

- If you're going to London, (remember that) it's crowded in summer.

- Hypothetical condition include:

- Unreality now: which includes hypotheses about:

A. Now

- If I had the money, I would be happy.

B. Future

- If you would lend me the money, I would be happy.

2- Rejected Past:

We have past perfect in the conditional clause:

- If I had won the lottery, I would have bought yacht last year.

Sequence of Tense in English Conditional Clauses:

English can express three important ideas with "if":

1- If you call him, he will come. [Something will happen if a certain condition is fulfilled].

2- If you called him, he would come. [the probable result of a certain condition that we suppose or imagine. The "if" clause is not taken place at this moment, but I can imagine the probable result. We include here all the unreal if clause, like: [If you were a fish, the cat would eat you].

3- If you had called him, he would have come. [but he did not come, why ? because you did not call him].

All the number three types are impossible ideas because we know the condition was not fulfilled.

Hypothetical Conditions:

In sentences of hypothetical conditions the past subjunctive is used in the "if" clause and "should and would + the infinitive" are used in the main clause. Sentences of this kind may refer to present time, past time or future time.

A. Present Time:

This kind of condition is used when the speaker feels or believes that what he proposes is either not possible or unlikely. It also expresses something imaginary in the sense that one imagines the result when the condition is present.

- If the hat suited me, I would buy it.

[If the hat suited me now ...].

B-Past Time:

This kind of condition is used when some event that was not real in the past or an event that did not happen is expressed. We will note that there is usually an implied negative: ... but he did not work hard].

C- Future Time:

The idea of Futurity hypothetical conditions is often expressed by the same construction as is used for the present, sometimes with a time adverb or phrase.

- If John worked hard next time, he would pass the exam.

But futurity in the "if" clause is expressed by "were to + infinitive" e.g.:

- If our train were to arrive punctually, we should have time to visit our sister.

Conditional Conjunctions:

There are other types which are part from the three main types:

A. Cause and Effect:

- You were a fool if you went out without a gat on.

B. A doubtful view of conditional type 1- is emphasized by the use of "should" the inverted forms are the more literary.

- Should he refuse you, refer him to me.

- If I should die, think only this to me.

C. In polite forms where the consent of another person is sought "will" and "would" are found after "if".

- I should be very grateful if you would do that for me.

D. Greater improbability in conditional types [real, unreal] is achieved by using "were – to" after "if" and "should", "would", "could" or "might" in the principle clause.

- If you were to come tomorrow, I might have time to see you.

E. There are also unreal conditions with a relative pronoun but not if:

- A man who behaved like that, ought to be punished.

F1. Provided that they paid in advance, I would do business with them.

2- As long as we could insure the goods, we could consider their offers.

- On condition that they would order regularly, we could agree about special prices.

G- Unless:

In unreal conditions, it has a strong sense of unprobability [the condition is an open one, but the speaker feels or knows that fulfillment is highly improbable]. So unless does not usually replace if, did not which expresses negative conditions as contrast with real facts, [unless = except, if].

- He wouldn't pay unless he had the money. [he wouldn't pay] [except, if he had the money].

- He would pay unless he hadn't any money.

[He would pay] [except, if he didn't have money].

Conditionals from Different Points of Views:

English conditionals as a topic has been dealt with differently by various schools that influenced the treatment of this topic each according its own approach.

So the traditional school takes its data mainly from written sources, which are literary and formal, but far removed from the language of every day speech. The traditional grammarians' methods of language analysis can be called prescriptive. They usually deal with each part of speech in asperate chapter in which the morphology, syntax and semantics of the part of speech were considered. These grammarians were not consistent in their method of description. In defining parts of speech, they sometimes depended upon the from of the word, sometimes on its function in the sentence and in its meaning. Traditional grammar relates English conditions to the whole language by starting with a definition and analysis of the parts of speech. A separate topic that deals with the different kinds of sentences [simple, compound, complex] follows. The different kinds of clauses are then discusses. Conditionals do not start to play their role in the language until after the adverbial clauses within the complex sentence have been dealt with. This role of the conditionals as completely separate topic seems to be very much similar to the role of any other topic in the English grammar.

While the structuralists from the second school of thought that influenced the treatment of conditional constructions, so it can be called descriptive approach. Instead of accepting the traditional view that centered around the written form they gave more significance to the spoken form. They considered speech as the fundamental natural phenomenon and writing as a secondary symbolization based on speech. They usually take their data from the spoken rather than written form of the language. They excluded the use of meaning and the speaker's knowledge of his own language as tools of analysis. English sentence patterns are made up of several different features working together in complicated ways and on different levels. The first level [Phonology] is occupied by sounds [vowels and consonants] that combine to form words [level of morphology], these words can be grouped differently [level of syntax] according to their form and the position they occupy in patterns. It can be said that the emphasis of the structuralists' approach is usually on sentence building rather than on sentence analysis. English conditionals as a subject can be linked with the framework of the English language either by utilizing the processes of modification and combination or by presenting a formal analysis of English verb.

While the transformational-generative school stresses at the same time what goes on in the speaker's mind calling this the deep structure of the language or the speaker's competence.

What the speaker actually utters is called the surface structure or his performance. The transformations play their part in generating new sentences. This school emphasizes semantics more than the structuralists do because contrasts in deep structure depend largely on contrasts in meaning. They still deal with language formally by concentrating their main attention on formal distinctions. This school has thoroughly influence the methods by which any natural language can be studied in that it has its starting point in semantics, then it goes on to syntax and phonology. Syntax gives two out puts: one to semantics the other to phonology. According to this school grammar is divided into the following three components:

- A. Syntactic component.
- B. The phonological component.
- C. The semantic component.

The transformational generative theory has not been applied to the formation of conditional constructions, but according to this school it may be said that each conditional patterns on its surface structure, is a manifestation of the application of certain transformational rules on the deep structure.

Semantic Classification of English Conditionals:

The choice of tenses in passage of English speaker's point of view in time, for each separate verb, this is why the tenses in a conditional construction depend on the meaning in each case.

The different types of conditional construction are expressed by the different moods of the English verb. Mood can be defined as an attitude towards activity, therefore, a conditional construction can either express an activity that is fulfilled or is certain to be fulfilled, in which case it is concerned with fact, or it can express an unfulfilled activity, in which case it is concerned with non-fact. Moreover, a conditional construction may signal something true or untrue, something wished for or to be done or something doubtful.

Conditional constructions can be formed in both the indicative and subjunctive moods. When the indicative mood is utilized, the construction expresses a fact, a possibility or a probability; when the subjunctive mood is utilized, these constructions express something contrary to fact, an impossibility or an improbability.

English conditionals can be classified into two main sets if mood is taken as a basis for such a classification. These two sets are:

- 1- The real condition.
- 2- The unreal condition.

The Unreal Condition:

This type of condition employs the tenses of the subjunctive mood to express suppositions, uncertainty, hesitation and difference. But the problem is that the indicative and subjunctive moods of the English verb are not kept distinct in a very clear way. In the preterit, only one verb has a subjunctive form that is distinct from the indicative, and that only in the singular, were (indicative was)' this form is to agreed extent being replaced by was, to that the tendency is to get ride of the preterit subjunctive form in all cases. This subjunctive form of the verb has been losing ground for centuries in this usage, but there are still a few constructions in which it is nearly universal such as in [if I were you and if the train service were better...].

The subjunctive mood can be identified where be is followed by an adjective such as [If this rumor be true, everything is possible. It can also be recognized when the base of the verb is used precede by a third person singular as its subject such as [if night falls before we get out of the swamp, we are lost].

Types of the Unreal Condition:

There are two types of the unreal condition:

1- The theoretical or reject condition:

In this type of condition, the action or state seems less near to us, seems to us of only theoretical nature with no prospect of our having to deal with it practically. The subjunctive forms of the verb are used to express a conceived situation which, although theoretical, is not really impossible e.g.

- If it should rain tomorrow, I wouldn't go.

2- Condition Contrary to Fact:

This type is also called the impossible condition because the action expressed in the conditional construction can not be fulfilled as a result of something else taking place [which is contrary to fact] as in:

- If I had known of your arrival, I should have met you.

[But I did not know, so I did not meet you].

This type of condition is also used to express imaginary supposition, e.g.

- If I were you, I had cut down all those trees.

Function of the Unreal Condition:

Such conditionals usually signal:

1- Negative facts:

- I should speak if I were sure of the answer. [this implies a negative because it signals the uncertainty of the answer].

2- The opposite of reality:

- If Tom were leaving now.... [This signal something contrary to facts].

3- A. Improbability of fulfillment:

- If he left in an hour's time

B. Extreme improbality of fulfillment:

- If he were to ask you for the money tomorrow, whatever would you do ?

4- Unfulfilled actions:

- If only he would not eat so much garlic.

5- Impossible actions:

- If she were less plain, he might proposes to he.

6- Certain results:

- If it stopped snowing, he would go out.

7- Possibility:

- If it stopped snowing, we might go out.

8- Volition under hypothetical conditions:

- I wouldn't lady Mickelhan's butler if you made me a duck.

9- A. Imaginary suppositions:

- If I were you, I would paint the hall door red.

B. High degree of supposition:

- If, by any chance, you should be interested, I would be glad to send you a copy of my book.

10- A. Emphasizing will:

- If had the choice of life, I would injure no man and relieve every distress.

B. Eliminating will:

- If I had the choice of life, I should be able to fill everyday with pleasure.

11- A. Emphasis with a stresses should:

- If he should have come when you got there, I should be surprised.

B- Emphatic situations:

- If it was not that you have been ill, I should consider your work unsatisfactory.

12- Expectation:

- If you left at ten, you should arrive in time.

13- Permission a ability:

- If it stopped snowing, we could go out.

Wish:

It is used to express something unlikely to be achieved unrealizable or hardly realizable. In sentences of this type may refer to:

1- Present time:

- I wish I earned lots of money [now].

2- Future time:

- I wish you would lend me money next year.

3- Past time:

- I wish you had lent me the money.

So tenses after wish are similar to the tenses in the "if clauses" of hypothetical conditions. With regard to was and were, it has already been mentioned that were is chiefly a literary survival, which does not belong to natural spoken English except in such fixed phrases as:

- If I were you.

- If he were to + infinitive.

When condition is expressed without any conjunction by the word-order of a question, were is the rule:

- Were it not for him, I should speak up.

In the typical examples of preterit of imagination the reference is to the present or future, rather than to time at all, as the reality of the supposition is denied, but sometimes the unreality may refer to something in the past and then was is preferred to were:

- She spoke as if she was ashamed (not were). But:
- She speaks as if she were [was] ashamed.

In clauses of condition which have regarded to something in the past, but do not deny the reality or possibility, was not were, is the rule:

- It was never acted, or if it was, not above once,
Very often no real condition, but only a contrast is meant:
- If I was a bad carpenter, I was a worse tailor. [I was really bad as a carpenter and worse as a tailor].

Conclusion:

This paper is considered as an attempt to find out a solution to the problem of teaching conditionals in English. The nature of the difficult is associated with the nature of the differences between the foreign language and the native language.

The difficult is cause both by the learner's attempt to develop a new set of language habits against a back ground of different native habits and by the particular way a speaker chooses his form and construction.

Perhaps, the interference of the mother tongue is the most cause of such difficulty. As it is noticed that Arabic language has no such similar constructions, and even hypothetical conditionals a re expressed in a completely different way.

Thus, it is required that writers of books, syllabus designers and teachers should take into consideration such hypothetical constructions as they constitute a vital part of English grammar.

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