Towards an Alternative Approach
To Mood in Written English Sentences

Rawi T. Habeeb(Ph.D)
Kerkuk University, College of Education

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the mood system in English . It is an attempt to suggest a unified and comprehensive account of mood since the available studies on mood do not tackle the subject adequately . Most of these works differ in their manipulation of the topic . They differ in their definition and classification of mood and avoid speaking of it adequately . This may be due to the fact that most linguists who have dealt with the subject do not have a comprehensive conception on mood . This fact results in confusion and uncertainty on the part of the readers . Moreover , some linguists provide ambiguous taxonomies of mood by adding new categories that are not related to the topic in origin , and by neglecting important categories that are closely related to mood .

It has been noted also that most linguists try not to go deep into the fathoms of the
subject . They just point to its various categories and terms superficially leaving the
readers in a state of confusion and ambiguity . As a result , this study aims at suggesting an alternative approach to mood that takes into consideration all its
relevant phases and eliminates all the irrelevant information and terms attached to it
by some linguists .

This study is divided into three main sections . The first section is an introductory
one . Section two accounts for the viewpoints of various linguists concerning mood .
Section three includes the alternative suggested approach to mood .

1 . Introduction

Most linguists agree that mood is the attitude of the sentence producer towards what he is saying . In other words , it expresses the producer's opinion about the content of his utterance ; whether he thinks the proposition of his utterance is true, likely or doubtful . According to this view , mood is

not related to grammar at all ; therefore , this study argues that mood concerns the relation between the form of the utterance and the writer and the reader's concept of its proposition .

In the other words , mood is the writer's intention regarding the purpose behind his utterance i.e. does he want his utterance to be viewed by the reader as a statement , a question , etc . The form and structure of his utterance will decide this . In addition , the reader's understanding of the utterance is also related to mood since the structure of the utterance makes the reader decide that the produced utterance is a statement , a question , a command or an exclamation . Thus , mood is not only writer-oriented but reader – oriented also . Ultimately , the main concern of mood is to show how the writer intends his utterance to be understood by the reader and how the reader can understand the proposition of this utterance through its structure .

Most linguists who have written about mood avoid going deeply into the fathoms of the subject . They just give general remarks on it and refrain from discussing all its aspects . For instance , they do not say what is the relation between grammar and
" the speaker's attitude towards what he is saying " , and if so why don not they relate it to pragmatics or psycholinguistics instead of grammar ?

Furthermore , linguists do not agree on a unified taxonomy of mood . Some of them argue that there are six categories of mood : the declarative , the conditional , the subjunctive , the evidential and the interrogative (cf : Lardiere 2006 : 88 – 9)

Others maintain that there are two types of mood categories : major categories and minor categories . The former group includes : the declarative , the imperative and the interrogative . The latter includes eight sub-types : the tag-declarative , the tag-imperative , the pseudo-imperative , the alternative questions , the exclamative , the optative , the " one more " and the curses . (cf : Akmajian et al 1995 : 235).

These two totally different ways of classification seem very peculiar and ambiguous .
Both of them mention classes that are not related to mood and neglect very important ones . For example , there is no mention of the subjunctive mood in the second classification . From these two instances , we can estimate the wide range of confusion and misunderstanding caused by these two taxonomies and many of the other ones .

From these shortcomings the value of this study arises since this study tries to provide a comprehensive and clear account of mood and suggest a unified taxonomy that takes into consideration all its relevant categories . The current study is thought and intended to be of great value and

significance for both learners and teachers of English since it is hoped to clarify and enrich an important area of grammar .

This study is concerned with mood in written language only . The mood of the spoken language is not to be dealt with here . Besides , the current study applies on independent clauses only . Dependent clauses and minor clauses fall outside the scope of this study .

Finally , this study will adopt a procedure that is hoped to be straightforward and easy to be follow by readers . First , the views of some linguists and schools of linguistics regarding mood are going to be presented in detail in order to show and prove the wide range of overlap and confusion between them . Then , an alternative model is suggested and explained in detail . The suggested model includes a definition of mood derived from various definitions and revised in away that suits the nature of the study . It also includes an alternative classification that covers all mood categories . The suggested model is intended to unify the miscellaneous attitudes of mood in one comprehensive study .

2 . Various Viewpoints on Mood

Most linguists differ in their viewpoints concerning mood . They differ in both the way mood is defined and the way it is classified . The coming sections are dedicated to discuss the various concepts on mood . First the viewpoint of the structural formal school represented by *Quirk* and his followers is displayed . Then , the viewpoint of the functional school represented by *Halliday* is presented . Finally , different viewpoints suggested by various linguists are also manifested to prove the extent to which these linguists differ in their treatment of the subject .

2 . 1 . The Viewpoint of the Formal School

The formal school represented by *Quirk* sees that mood relates the verbal action to such conditions as certainty , obligation , necessity , possibility . *Quirk* et al(1973 : 40) makes a distinction between the unmarked indicative mood and the marked moods : the imperative and the subjunctive . See fig (1) below :
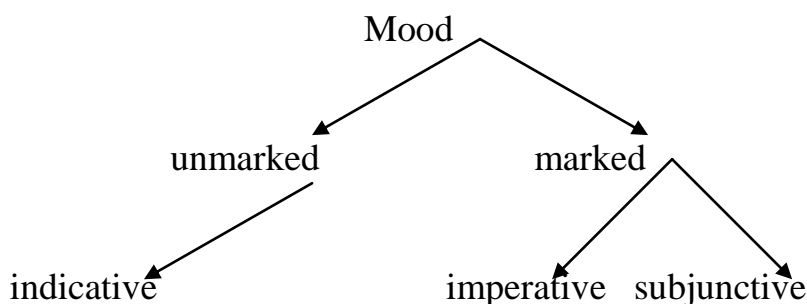
Fig (1) : Quirk's Classification of Mood

Later Quirk et al (ibid : 51) argue that mood is expressed to very minor extent by the subjunctive ; to a much greater extent by past tense , but above all by means of the modal auxiliaries .

Quirk et al do not explain what is meant by the term *' subjunctive '* and why they call the indicative mood unmarked , while the subjunctive and the imperative moods are marked . Besides , they do not say anything about the interrogative and the exclamative moods .moreover , it is not clear how they base their classification ; i.e. what is the relation between the imperative and the subjunctive moods ?

Later , they explain their terms as follows :
i) The indicative mood is used in statements . It is manifested when the speaker
    wants to state something as in the following examples :

    1 – George failed in the exam .
    2 – My uncle loves music .

ii) The imperative mood is used in orders , commands and entreaties in which the
    base form of the verb is used (Aziz 1989 : 76)

    e.g.)
    3 – Give me the key .
    4 – Don't waste your time .

iii) The subjunctive mood includes three subclasses : the mandative , the formulaic
    and the subjunctive *' were '* . The mandative mood can be expressed by
    that – clauses in which the verb has only one form viz : the base . The mandative
    mood can be used with that – clauses containing verbs of recommendation ,
    resolution , demand and so on .   (Quirk et al 1985 : 155)

    5 – We demand that he finish the task .

6 – They insist that she clean the room .

The formulaic subjunctive is used in certain fixed expressions that have to be learnt as wholes . There is also a lack of concord between the subject and the main verb .

e.g.)
7 – God save the queen .
8 – Heaven forbid that .

The subjunctive *' were '* is hypothetical in meaning . It is used in conditional and concessive clauses and in subordinate clauses after optative verbs like *' wish '* .

(see Greenbaum and Quirk 1990 : 295)

e.g.)
9 – I wish I were with them .
10 – If she were there , we would not do it .

Furthermore , mood can also be expressed by the modal past that conveys such meanings as possibility , probability , etc .

e.g.)
11 – I wondered if you'd like a drink .

In this example , the use of the past tense (not the present) involves an attitudinal rather that a time distinction . Finally , mood can be expressed by the modal auxiliaries which imply the attitude of the writer . They convey such meanings as certainty , possibility , probability , ability , obligation , etc . (Quirk etal 1985 : 135 - 40) . Consider the following examples :-

12 – Jane must be at home . (certainty)
13 – George must finish the report . (obligation)
14 – He can come today . (possibility)
15 – They would be at home . (probability)
16 – Nada can drive a car . (ability)

2 . 2 . The Viewpoint of the Functional School

For the functional school linguists (Halliday and his followers) mood consists of two parts : the subject which is a nominal ' group ' and the finite operator which is part of the verbal group . The finite operator may be an

auxiliary expressing tense like (is , was , has , etc) , an auxiliary expressing modality like (can , must , should , etc) or it can be fused with the lexical verb in a single word when the verb is in the present or past simple tense (see Halliday 1994 : 72) .

The clause might be looked upon as an exchange of information or an exchange of services . When the writer asks a question , he takes the role of a seeker of information and requires the reader to take the role of the supplier of the information required . Sometimes , the producer asks the receiver to give him something as in :

17 – Pass me the salt , please .
This is called an exchange of services . The grammatical category used to exchange information is the indicative mood which includes statements (declarative mood) and questions (interrogative mood) . The indicative mood depends on the existence and arrangement of the subject and the finite verb . If the subject precedes the finite operator , we will have the declarative mood , but if the subject follows the finite operator , we will have the interrogative mood (see Downing and Lock 2002 : 168) .

The finite operator has the function of making the proposition finite . This can be done by two ways :
i) By reference to the time of speaking . This is called primary tense
(Halliday 2003 : 202)

e.g.)
18 – Our cat was chasing a mouse .
In (18) the auxiliary ' was ' , which is the finite operator , indicates the primary tense of the sentence since it refers to the time of speaking .
ii) By reference to the judgment of the writer . This is called modality and it concerns the writer's view of the probability , obligation , ability ,etc Involved in
what he is saying (ibid : 316)
e.g.)
19 – He can be selfish .
In (19) the use of ' can ' indicates that the writer wants to express the probability involved in his saying .
Halliday (1994 : 43) maintains that mood can either be indicative or imperative . The former can either be declarative or interrogative , while the latter can either be positive imperative or negative imperative (see fig(2) below) .
He (ibid : 47) adds that to identify the theme of a clause depends on the choice of mood . Thus , if the mood is declarative , a nominal group functioning as subject represents the theme of the clause . If the mood is

Yes/No interrogative , the finite operator and the subject will represent the theme and so on .
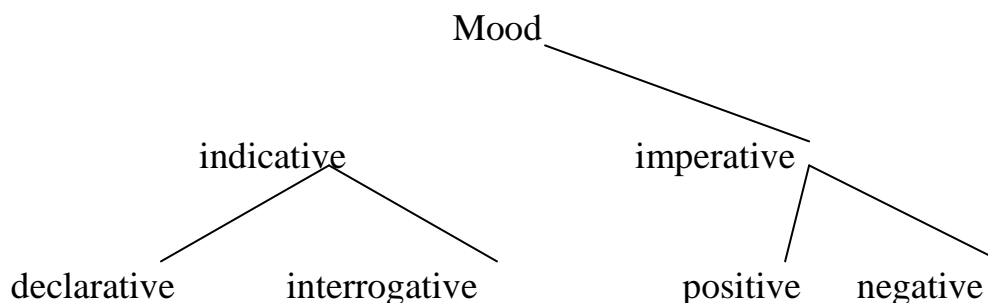
Mood
indicative   imperative
declarative   interrogative   positive   negative

Fig (2) : Halliday's Taxonomy of Mood

It is clear from the above discussion that Halliday's taxonomy is not convincing since he does not explain the bases on which he relies in proposing the main dichotomy
' indicative ' and ' imperative ' . Besides , he does not say anything about the subjunctive and exclamative moods . Moreover , he does not explain in detail the role of modal auxiliaries in deciding mood .

2 .3. Other Viewpoints on Mood

In this section the viewpoints of some linguists about mood are displayed to prove that there is no agreement among linguists concerning mood . Eckersley and Eckersley (1960 : 225) point out that mood is a grammatical term used to denote the forms that a verb takes to show what work it is doing (e.g. whether it is expressing a statement , a command , a wish , etc) . Then they define mood again as the manner in which the action or state as thought of by the speaker .
They (ibid) argue that there are three categories of mood : the indicative , the imperative and the subjunctive . The indicative is used to make statements and ask questions . The imperative is used to give orders or to make requests . The request may be an entreaty , an instruction , an invitation , a suggestion , a condition , etc . The subjunctive has three forms of the verb : the present subjunctive , the past subjunctive , and the past perfect subjunctive . In the present subjunctive , the base form of the verb is used with all persons . In the past subjunctive , the past form of the verb is

used except that the verb ***Be*** has the form ' were ' used with all persons . The past perfect subjunctive is identical with the past perfect tense (See fig(3) below). Furthermore , they (ibid. 227) add that the present subjunctive is used to denote the following meanings :

i) Wishes or prayers .

    e.g.)

    20 – God bless you .

ii) Conditions or concessions .

    e.g.)

    21 – If the news be true , things will be worse .

iii) Wills .

    e.g.)

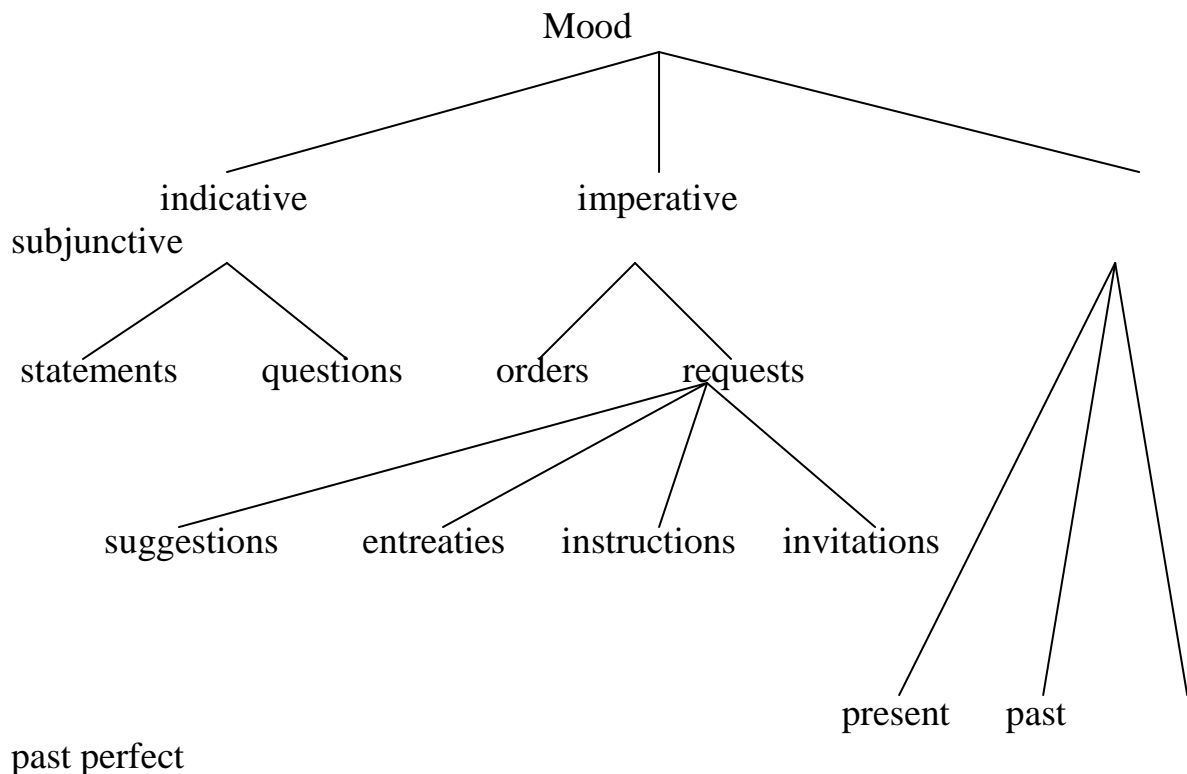   22 – It is our wish that he do it .

Mood

    indicative   imperative

subjunctive

statements   questions   orders   requests

suggestions   entreaties   instructions   invitations

present   past

past perfect

Fig (3) : Eckersley and Eckersley's
Taxonomy of Mood .

Cattell (1969 : 125) argues that there are four types of mood : the infinitive , the imperative , the indicative and the subjunctive . The infinitive mood refers to the uninflected form of the verb used without a subject . This explanation seems ambiguous and confusing because Cattell does not maintain and elaborate what he means by this saying neither does he give examples that may clarify his standpoint . Moreover , it is not clear what is the relation between mood and the infinitive form of the verb .

Further , Cattell (ibid : 125) points out that the imperative mood applies to commands , the indicative applies to predications , while the subjunctive applies to suppositions . This can be illustrated diagrammatically as follows :
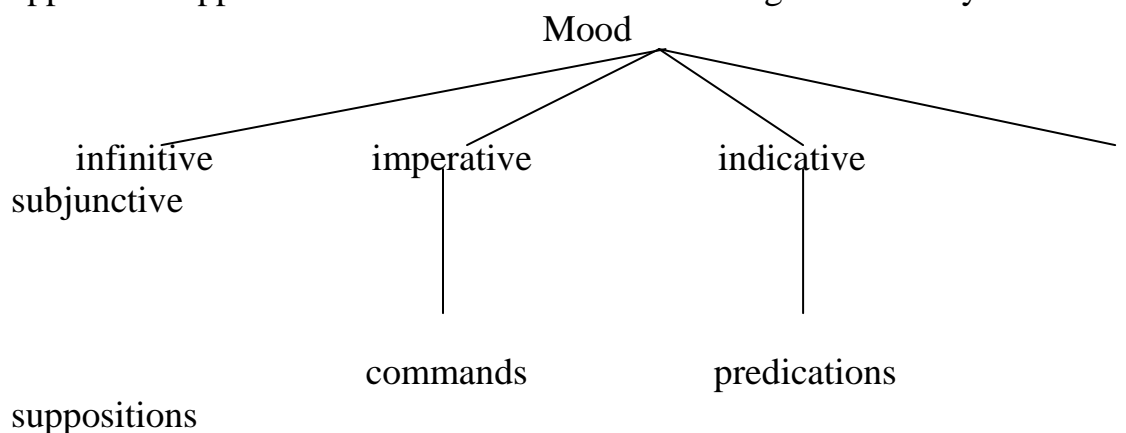
Mood

infinitive   imperative   indicative
subjunctive

commands   predications
suppositions

Fig (4) : Cattell's Taxonomy of Mood

   Akmajan et al (1995 : 235) distinguish between verbal mood and sentential mood . As for the verbal , a verb has the subjunctive mood if it has a certain inflection . Sentential mood , on the other hand , falls into three types : the declarative , the imperative and the interrogative . These are called the major moods . However , there are other minor moods . These can be illustrated as follows :

i) Tag – declarative :
    e.g.)
    23 – You have been sleeping , haven't you ?
ii) Tag – imperative :
    e.g.)
    24 – Keep quiet , will you ?

iii) Pseudo – imperative :
    e.g.)
    25 – Move and I'll shoot .
iv) Alternative question :
    e.g.)
    26 – Will you stay here or go home ?
v   ) Exclamative :
    e.g.)
    27 – How beautiful she is !
vi) Optative :
    e.g.)

28 – May he rest in peace .

vii) ' One more ' :

e.g.)

29 – One more word and I'll leave .

viii) Curse :

e.g.)

30 – You pig , bag of wind ..!

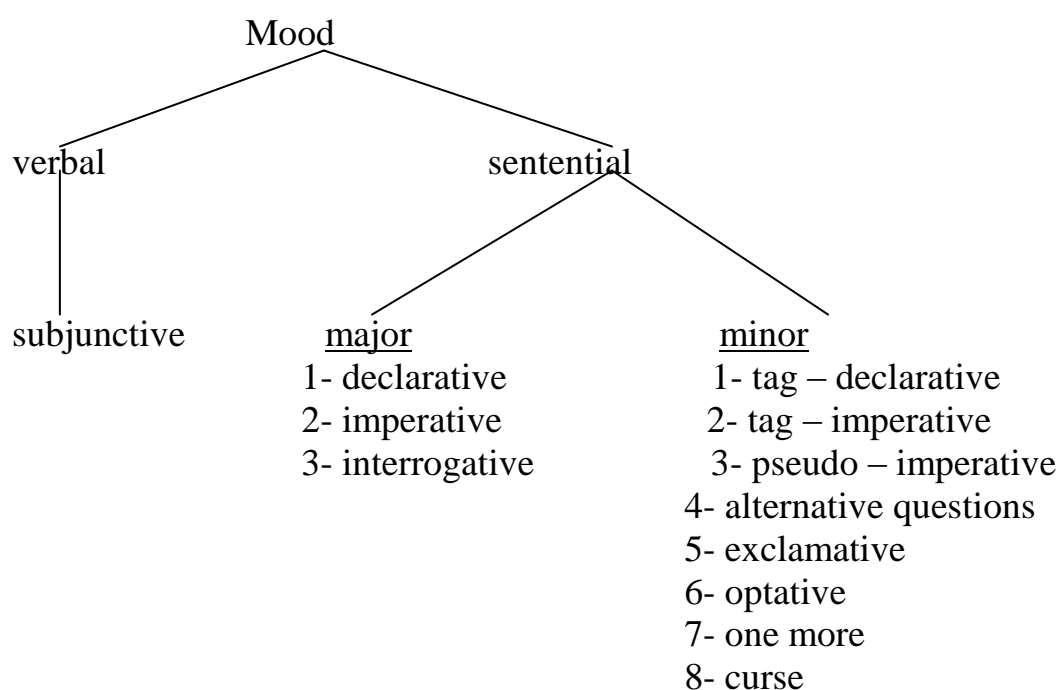The following diagram illustrates these classes :

```
                        Mood
             /                        \
       verbal                      sentential
          |                        /           \
    subjunctive              major             minor
                           1- declarative     1- tag – declarative
                           2- imperative      2- tag – imperative
                           3- interrogative   3- pseudo – imperative
                                              4- alternative questions
                                              5- exclamative
                                              6- optative
                                              7- one more
                                              8- curse
```

Fig (5) Akmajian Taxonomy
of Mood

For Leech and Svartvik (1994 : 152 – 177) , mood is something totally different . They see that mood concerns the use of language to express the emotions and attitudes of the speaker , and the speaker uses it to influence the attitude and behaviour of the receiver . For them , this can be done by using different ways :

a) By emotive emphasis which includes :-
i) interjections :

e.g.)   Oh , Ah , Wow , etc .

ii) exclamations :

e.g.)

31 – How good of you !iii) repetition :

32 – This house is very very old .

v) emphatic questions :

e.g.)

35 – She didn't speak at all .

vi) exclamatory and rhetorical questions :

e.g.)

36 – Wasn't it a marvellous party ?

vii) sentence adverbial (surprisingly , strangely , etc) :

e.g.)

37 - Fortunately , we were near the beach .

b) By other emotions which includes :-

i) liking or disliking :

e.g.)

38 – she likes music .

ii) preference :

e.g.)

39 – I prefer trains to buses .

iii) hope :

e.g.)

40 – I hope that he arrives on time .

iv) anticipation

e.g.)

41 – I'm looking forward to receive your reply .

v) disappointing :

e.g.)

42 – I'm disappointed that she left .

vi) approval or disapproval :

e.g.)

43 – I approve of the plan .

vii) surprise :

e.g.)

44 – It is surprising that she failed .

viii) concern or worry :

e.g.)

45 – I'm worried that he may fail .

c) By expressions of volition which include :

i) willingness :
   e.g.)
   46 – I will help you .

ii) wish :
   e.g.)
   47 – I want you to make the tea .

iii) intention :
   e.g.)
   48 – He intended to hold a party .

iv) insistence :
   e.g.)
   49 – He insisted on attending the meeting .

D) By influencing people which includes :

i) permission :
   e.g.)
   50 – Can I sit here ?

ii) obligation :
   e.g.)
   51 – You must be back by 3 p.m. .

iii) command :
   e.g.)
   52 – Shut the door .

iv) request :
   e.g.)
   53 – Could you lend me your pen ?

v) advice and suggestion :
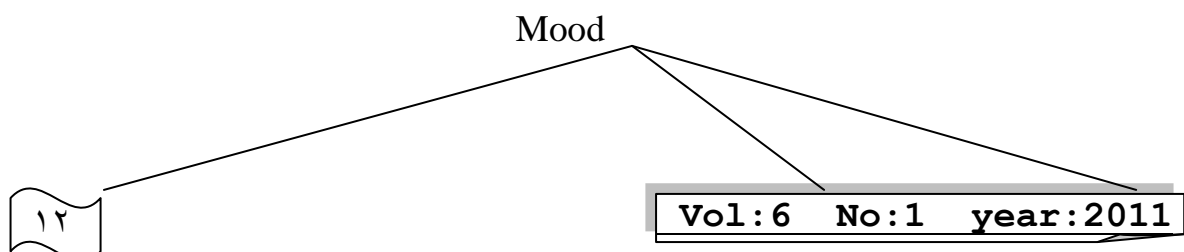   e.g.)
   54 – You should stay in bed .

vi) warning , promise , threat :
   e.g.)
   55 – I promise to come early .

   Thus , Leech and Svartvik's classification of mood can be illustrated diagrammatically as follows :

Mood

emotive emphasis	other emotions	volition	influencing people
1- interjections	1- liking or disliking	1- willingness	1- permission
2- exclamations	2- preference	2- wish	2- obligation
3- repetition	3- hope	3- intention	3- command
4- intensification	4- anticipation	4- insistence	4- request
5- emphatic questions	5- disappointing		5- advice or suggestion
6- emphatic negation	6- approval or disapproval		6- warning ,
7- exclamatory questions	7- surprise		promise , threat
8- sentence adverbials	8- concern or worry		

Fig (6) : Leech and Svartvik's
Taxonomy of Mood .

Lardiere (2006 : 88) argues that mood can be classified into six classes :
i) The indicative mood is used for making declarative sentences .
  e.g.)
  56 – She is coming tonight .
ii) The interrogative mood is used for asking questions .
  e.g.)
  57 – What is your favourite season ?
iii) The imperative mood is used for giving commands .
  e.g.)
  58 – Open the window , please .
iv) The subjunctive mood is used to express desires , wishes , doubts , etc .
  e.g.)
  59 – I hope that he come soon .

v) The conditional mood is used to show what one would or should do .
  e.g.)
  60 – She would gladly do it , but she didn't .
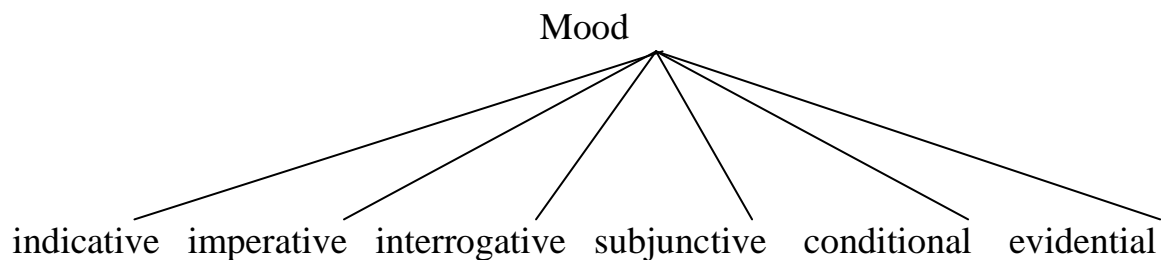vi) Evidential mood is used to indicate a degree of certainty or doubt . The

proposition is based on the kind of evidence available for it . It can be expressed
by lexical means as in expressions like : I know , I heard , I doubt ; or by
adverbs like : apparently , evidently , clearly , etc .

Lardiere's classification of mood can be illustrated as follows :

```
                          Mood
       ┌──────┬──────┬──────┴──────┬──────┬──────┐
indicative imperative interrogative subjunctive conditional evidential
```

Lardiere's Taxonomy
of Mood

The Wikipedia free encyclopedia (2008) goes further than that when it (pp. 2 – 8) classifies mood into two main types : the realis and the irrealis . Each type includes a number of subtypes . This can be illustrated as follows :

A) The realis mood

The realis mood indicates that something is actually the case or actually not the case . It includes four subtypes of mood .

1. The declarative mood
    It indicates that the statement is true . It is equivalent to the indicative mood or the inferential mood .
2. The energetic mood
    It expresses something which is strongly believed or which the speaker wishes to emphasize .
3. The generic mood
    It is used to generalize a particular class of things .
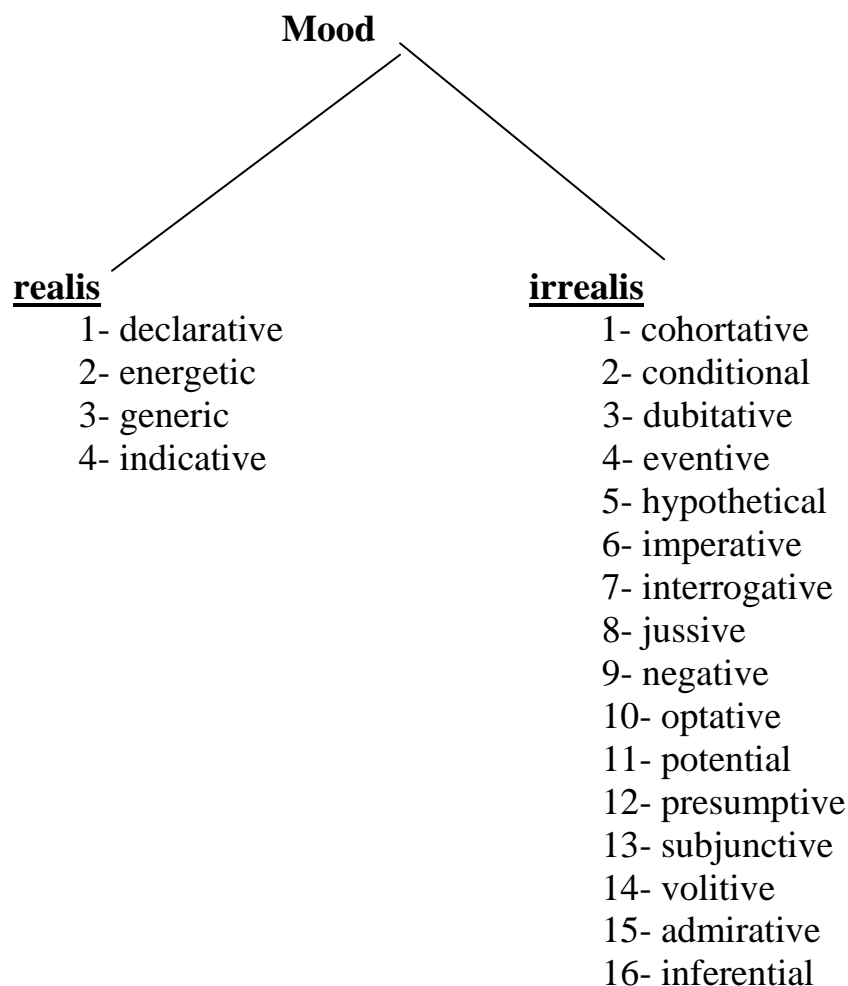4. The indicative mood
    It is sometimes called the evidential . It is used for factual statements and positive beliefs .

B) The irrealis mood

The irrealis mood indicates that a certain situation or action is not known to have happened as the speaker is talking . It includes sixteen subtypes of mood :

1. The cohortative mood
    It is sometimes called the ' hortatory ' . It is used to express plea , insistence , wish , desire , command , etc .
2. The conditional mood
    It is used to speak of an event whose realization depends on a certain condition.
3. The dubitative mood
    It expresses the speaker's doubts about the event denoted by the verb .
4. The eventive mood
    It indicates the probability denoted by the verb .
5. The hypothetical mood
    It expresses a counterfactual but possible event .
6. The imperative mood
    It expresses direct commands ,requests or prohibitions .
7. The interrogative mood
    It is used for asking questions .
8. The jussive mood
    It expresses plea , insistence , wish , desire , etc .
9. The negative mood
    It expresses a negative action .
10. The optative mood
    It expresses hopes , wishes or commands .
11. The potential mood
    It indicates that the speaker's opinion contains probability .
12. The presumptive mood
    It expresses presuppositions or hypotheses regarding the fact denoted by the verb .
13. The subjunctive mood
    It is also called the conjunctive . It is used with dependent clauses to express unlikely events or opinions .
14. The volitive mood
    It is used to indicate the speaker's desires , wishes or fears .
15. The admirative mood
    It is used to express surprise , doubt , irony .
16. The inferential mood
    It is used to report a non – witnessed event without confirming .

It is clear from the above discussion that the classification is doubtful and unreliable . The terms used are vague and strange and the definitions unclear and sometimes repeated . The above classification can be shown in fig (8) below :

Mood

<u>**realis**</u>	<u>**irrealis**</u>
1- declarative	1- cohortative
2- energetic	2- conditional
3- generic	3- dubitative
4- indicative	4- eventive
	5- hypothetical
	6- imperative
	7- interrogative
	8- jussive
	9- negative
	10- optative
	11- potential
	12- presumptive
	13- subjunctive
	14- volitive
	15- admirative
	16- inferential

The Taxonomy of the Wikipedia
Encyclopedia concerning Mood

3 . A Suggested Model

The current study argues that mood can be defined as the relationship that holds between the form of the sentence and the writer and reader's concept of its proposition . This means that mood is both writer-oriented and reader-oriented . It concerns the writer's intention concerning the purpose of his sentence ; does he intend his sentence to be understood as a statement , a question , an order , etc ? This can be achieved through different sentence structures . The reader , on his part , can estimate the writer's intention through these structures . He will be able to predict whether the writer wants to state something , to ask a question , to deliver an order , etc .

As far as the classification of mood is concerned , the current study argues that mood can be of two types : syntactic mood and semantic mood . The syntactic mood is related to the structure and arrangement of different sentence constituents . Within the syntactic mood , there are four mood categories : the indicative , the interrogative, the imperative and the exclamative . The arrangement of sentence elements decides the mood type here . Thus , putting the subject before the finite verb phrase would indicate that the writer wants to state something , while putting the operator before the subject would indicate that the writer wants to ask a question and so on .

The semantic moods , on the other hand , fall in four divisions also : the subjunctive , the modal past , modality auxiliaries and modulation auxiliaries

First , the subjunctive mood is characterized by lack of concord between the subject and the main verb . It is indicated by that – clause when the main clause contains an expression or a verb of recommendation , resolution , demand , suggestion , etc .

e.g.)
61 – I insist that he clean the room .
62 – They suggested that she come immediately .

The subjunctive mood can also be expressed by certain fixed expressions that indicate wishes , prayers , etc .

e.g.)
63 – Long live liberty .
64 – God protect them .

Further , the subjunctive mood can be found in the use of ' were ' instead of ' was'. This is a hypothetical ' were ' found in unlikely wishes , suppositions and conditions and concessions .

e.g.)
65 – I wish I were in France .
66 – If she were with us , we would tell her .

Secondly , the modal past may also convey such meanings as possibility , probability , etc . The use of the past tense here involves an attitudinal rather than a time distinction .

e.g.)
67 – I wondered if you like her .
68 – I wanted to know whether she is there .

Thirdly , modality auxiliaries convey such meanings as certainty , possibility and probability .

e.g.)

  69 – They may arrive tonight . (possibility)
  70 – That must be your father . (certainty)
  71 – John will be at home by now . (probability)

  Finally , modulation auxiliaries convey such meanings as ability , permission and obligation .
  e.g.)
  72 – Sami can run fast . (ability)
  73 – You may go now . (permission)
  74 – You should not move . (obligation)

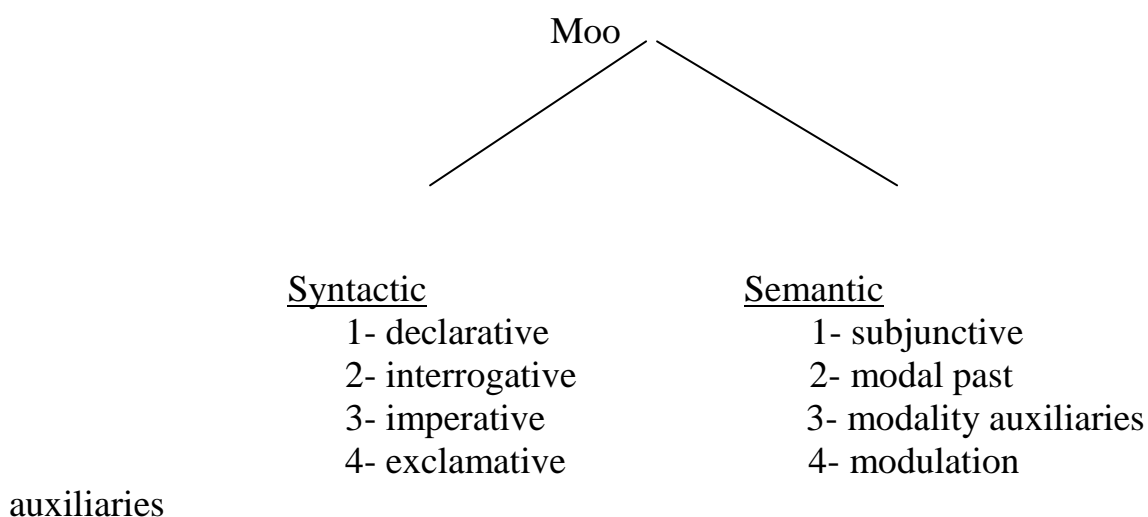 The suggested classification may be illustrated diagrammatically as follows :

           Moo

Syntactic   Semantic
  1- declarative   1- subjunctive
  2- interrogative   2- modal past
  3- imperative   3- modality auxiliaries
  4- exclamative   4- modulation

auxiliaries

      Fig (9) : The Suggested Taxonomy of
          Mood .

Conclusions :

  The current study comes up with the following conclusions :

1) Mood is not only writer – oriented , but also it is reader – oriented . This means
  that it is not the writer only who decides the mood type ; the reader can also do
  that through the structure of the produced sentence .
2) Most linguists who have written about mood have not dealt with the topic

adequately . Some of them propose classes that are not related to mood ; others neglect important classes in their classification of mood .

Bibliography

- Akmajian , A ,R. Demers,A.Farmer and R. Harnish (1995) : Linguistics : An Introduction to Language and Communication.
London : The MIT Press .
- Aziz , Y . (1989) : A Contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic .
Mosul : Mosul Univ Press .

- Cattell , N . (1969) : The New English Grammar . London : The MIT Press .
- Downing , A and P. Lock (2002) : A University course in English Grammar .
London : Routledge .
- Eckersley , C . and J. Eckersley (1960) : A Comprehensive English Grammar .
London : Longman .
- Greenbaum , S . and R. Quirk (1990) : Student's Grammar of English
London : Longman .

- Halliday , M . (1994) : An Introduction to English Grammar .
London : Arnold .
- _____ (2003) : On Language and Linguistics . London : Continuum .
- Lardier , D . (2006) : " Words and their Parts " in R. Fasold and J. Conner – Linton (eds) : An Introduction to Language and Linguistics . London : CUP .
- Leech , G and J. Svartvik (1994) : A Communicative Grammar of English .
London : Longman .

- Quirk , R ,S. Greenbaum and J. Svartvic(1973) : A University Grammar of English .
London : Longman .

- Quirk R,S. Greenbaum,J. Svartvic and G. Leech (1985) : A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language .
London : Longman .
- Wikipedia the free encyclopedia en Wikipedia.org.(internet material)

نحو نظام بديل لصيغة الفعل في الجمل الانكليزية المكتوبة

د. راوي ترف حبيب عبد الله

مدرس

جامعة كركوك / كليةالتربية

الخلاصة :-

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة نظام صيغة الفعل (mood) في اللغة الانكليزية ومدى اختلاف اللغويين في تعريفه وتصنيفه حيث لوحظ أن أكثر اللغويين يختلفون اختلافا كبيراً في ذلك فمنهم من يقول أن نظام صيغة الفعل يقسم إلى أربعة أنواع ومنهم من ذهب إلى أنه أكثر من ذلك أو أقل من ذلك كما اختلفوا في تسمية تلك الأنواع وتعريفها فمنهم من يقترح أنواعاً جديدة لا تمت إلى الموضوع بصلة و يهمل أنواعاً أخرى ذات علاقة وثيقة بالموضوع .

كما لوحظ أيضاً أن معظم اللغويين يتجنبون الخوض في غمار هذا الموضوع ويكتفون بإشارة بسيطة له بتعريفه على أنه وجهة نظر المتكلم حيال الجملة التي يقولها دون أن يبينوا ما علاقة ذلك بالنحو ودون أن يفصِلوا ماذا يعني هذا التعريف .

لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى اقتراح نظام بديل لصيغة الفعل واضح المعالم وخالي من الغموض والالتباس . وكذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تشخيص حالات الخطأ والضبابية الموجودة لدى بعض اللغويين .

ويشتمل النظام البديل على تعريف دقيق للموضوع وكذلك يأخذ بنظر الاعتبار تصنيف بديل الأنواع الرئيسة في نظام صيغة الفعل ويستثني الأنواع التي أضافها بعض اللغويين دون وجه حق والتي لا تمت إلى الموضوع بأية صلة .

وتبدأ الدراسة بمقدمة تفصيلية للموضوع تشتمل على مشكلات البحث ونظامه وأهميته وفرضياته . ويتناول القسم الثاني من الدراسة عرضاً لأراء بعض اللغويين ومدارس اللغة بخصوص هذا الموضوع أما القسم الأخير فيتناول النظام البديل لصيغة الفعل الذي تم اقتراحه في هذه الدراسة .