

Learning English Conditionals: Where the Real Problem Lies

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1. Introduction:

Conditionals are one of the most important topics in language. They are used to express hypothetical thought and uncertainty that have deep implications to human reasoning and decision making. Traugott et al (1986: 3) state that the understanding of the human mechanism of constructing and comprehending conditionals provides basic insights into the cognitive processes, linguistic competence and inferential strategies of human beings. Conditional constructions also “reflect the human capacity to contemplate various situations and to infer consequences on the basis of known or imaginary conditions” (Chou, 2004: 1).

Conditionals, however, were often believed to be a big obstacle to overcome by teachers and learners of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) (cf. Berent, 1985; Kharma and Hajjaj, 1997; Yu-Shan, 2005 among others). The source of difficulty for Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999 – cited in Norris, 2003: 1) lies in the complex structures, complexity of meaning, oversimplified explanations and time-tense relationships implicit in the conditionals. For Norris (2003: 1) the complexity of expressing conditional sentences lies in the variety of possible meanings which includes areas of “cognitive reasoning, logical argument, psychological intent and desirability, and semantic nuances associated with real, counterfactual, or hypothetical events contingent on, inferred from or

caused by one or more of these events”. The paradox then is that the formal patterns of conditionals are very few in number and learning them is supposed to be an easy task but the semantic and pragmatic features of conditionals bring in difficulty to EFL learners.

The present study sheds light on various approaches to conditionals and views them from different perspectives. The research problem addressed crystallized in one central question and some related ones. Do advanced Iraqi learners still face difficulty in the recognition and production of various forms and functions of conditionals? If they do so, in what aspects? what are the possible reasons? and how can the problem be overcome?

2. Background Knowledge:

Conditional clauses, conditional sentences or conditionals, for short, are complex expressions which involve the dependence of one circumstance or event on the occurrence of another. They are syntactically and semantically complex. Syntactically, the forms of conditionals are different from other structures in English in having two clauses: a main clause and a subordinate clause. The subordinate clause typically begins with ‘if’, ‘unless’, ‘on condition that’, ‘providing’, ‘provided (that)’, ‘as long as’, ‘only if’, or ‘even if’. Semantically, conditionals express a variety of semantic relations: factual, predictive, imaginative, etc. Furthermore, conditionals have been viewed as having a pragmatic dimension. They can be used to perform a variety of communicative functions such as warning, promising, threatening, etc.

Although there has been a general argument on the structures that realize conditionals, no such argument is found in the literature over the meanings and uses of conditionals, a case which has led to different views and a

variety of classification. To begin with, Eckersley and Eckersley (1960: 347-52) identify two types of conditionals: open and hypothetical. In the former, the condition may or may not be fulfilled. This can be realized by present, past or future tense or by the imperative mood. For example:

1. *If you are right, I am wrong.*
2. *If what you say is true, that what I heard was wrong.*
3. *If you help me, I shall help you.*
4. *If he calls, tell him that I am not at home.*

In the latter, conditionals make a hypothesis which may be contrary to the fact. This type is usually realized by the past tense in the dependent clause, and 'would' or 'should' + the infinitive in the main clause. For example:

5. *If the grass needed cutting, I would have cut it [implying it didn't need]*

For Zandvoort (1962: 218) conditionals are of two types: open and rejected. Rejected conditions contain a modal preterit or pluperfect. Others are called open conditions. Palmer (1965: 132-36) draws a distinction between real, unreal, and unreal in the past. The first being realized by present tense, the second usually by past tense, and the third by past perfect.

Quirk et al (1972: 746-49) mention three types of conditionals on the basis of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the condition: open, hypothetical and special types of conditionals. Open condition leaves unresolved the question of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the condition. Hypothetical condition conveys the expectation that the condition will not be fulfilled. Apart from these two types, there are less usual types involving the use of present subjunctive restricted to formal contexts, for example:

6. *If any person be found guilty, he shall have the right of appeal.*

and syntactic ordering particularly with the operator ‘had’ in hypothetical clauses, for example:

Had I known, I would have never met her.

Following Quirk et al (1972), Leech and Svartvik (1975/1994: 96f) identify three types of conditionals: open, hypothetical and negative but from a different point of view. For them, the condition is open when the truth or falsehood of what the sentence describes is unknown, for example:

7. If you feel sick, take one of these pills.

The condition is hypothetical when the speaker assumes the falsehood or unlikelihood of what he is talking about. For example:

8. I would lend Peter the money if he needed it.

Negative condition is expressed by unless or ‘but for’, for example:

9. Unless Peter improves his work, he’ll fail the exam.

10. But for John, we would have lost the match.

Tregidgo (1980: 186-191) suggests that conditionals can be distinguished on two separate binary choices: event condition, which can either be open or theoretical, and truth condition, which can also be open or theoretical. Open event conditionals are based on the pattern if + present + future and entail the idea: ‘if X happens (or does not happen), Y will follow (or will be true).

For example:

11. If our next child is a boy we shall call him John.

Theoretical event conditions always refer to hypothetical future. For example:

12. If he left, everything will go to pieces.

Open truth conditions always imply “if it is true that”. For example:

13. IF this is love, I don’t want it.

Theoretical truth conditions also imply “if it was true that” but the idea is regarded either untrue or at least completely unproven. For example:

14. *If the store had hit you an inch lower down, you would have lost your sight.*

Quirk et al (1985: 1088-97) distinguish between another two types of conditionals: direct and indirect. The former indicates that the situation in the main clause is directly contingent on that of the conditional clause; while the latter depends on an implicit speech act of the utterance, i.e. the condition is not related to the situation in the if-clause, for example:

15. *She and I are just good friends, if you understand me.*

Direct conditions can either be open leaving unresolved the fulfilment of the condition, or hypothetical conveying the speaker’s belief that the condition will not be /is not/ or was not fulfilled. This is usually realized by simple past or past perfect.

Murphy (1994: 47) suggests that present tense is used when there is “a real possibility” of the fulfilment of a condition; past tense is restricted to unreal or an imagining situation although the meaning is present; whereas past perfect implies negative implications, for examples:

16. *If I find the key, I will tell you. [There is a real possibility that I’ll find it]*

17. *If I found a wallet in the street, I’d take it to the police.*

[I’m imagining the situation]

18. *If I had had a camera, I would have taken some photographs.*

[But I didn’t have a camera]

Swan (1995: 246f) views conditionals in terms of what he calls “ordinary tense” and “special tense”. In the first type, the use of the same tense in both the if-clause (protasis) and the main clause (apodosis) illustrates non-imaginary situations, for example:

19. *If you want to learn a musical instrument, you have to practice it.*

The use of present tense in the protasis together with future tense in the apodosis, on the other hand, implies talking about the future, for example:

20. *If I have enough time tomorrow, I'll come and see you.*

The special tense is used to refer to imaginary situations including “things that will probably not happen, situations that are untrue, or imaginary past events that did not happen and similar ideas” (Ibid.: 247), for examples:

21. *If I were rich, I would spend all my money traveling.*

22. *If you had asked me, I would have told you.*

Podlesskaya (1997 – in Moffie, 2000: 2) adopts a purely semantic approach to conditionals. She distinguishes “temporal, habitual and epistemic statuses... as parameters of the semantic classification of conditionals” .

Temporal status refers to whether the stated action refers to the past, present or future time; habitual status refers to the frequency of an event whether unique or habitual; whereas epistemy raises the question of whether the condition describes real, counterfactual, or hypothetical states of affairs. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999 – cited in Norris, 2003: 3f) state that English conditionals express three different kinds of semantic relationships: factual and imaginative and each has subtypes. Factual conditionals include four subtypes: generic, habitual, implicit inference and explicit inference. Generic conditionals express relationships that are true and unchanging. They are normally expressed with the simple present tense in the prostasis and apodosis. For example:

23. *If you heat water to 100°C, it boils.*

Habitual conditions are based on habit. The same tense (present or past) is used in both clauses, for examples:

24. *Whenever she washes the dishes, I dry them.*

25. *When he made a joke, we laughed.*

Implicit inference conditionals express inferences about specific time-bound relationships and tend to have the same tense in both clauses, for example:

26. *If anyone celebrated that night, it was Peter.*

Explicit inference conditionals refer to specific time-bound events or states in the ‘if’ clause. They can refer to past as well as present time and they do not have parallel tenses, aspects or modals in both clauses. Future conditionals express future plans or contingencies. They have simple present tense in the prosthesis and explicit indication of future time in the apodosis. Imaginative conditionals have two subsets: hypothetical and counterfactual. Hypothetical conditionals express in the prosthesis events or states thought unlikely yet possible by the speaker. Counterfactual conditions express in the prosthesis events or states thought impossible by the speaker. For examples:

27. *If I had the money, I would buy a house. (present hypothetical)*

28. *If Gandhi were alive, he would be shocked. (present counterfactual)*

Conditionals have also been approached pragmatically. It is argued that one is not going to get very far in a quest to understand the uses of conditionals in everyday discourse without consideration of the pragmatic level. Ford (1997 – cited in Moffie, 2000) suggests that conditionals may “reflect politeness and serves as resources for maneuvering through interactionally delicate territory” (P.6). Through this, she investigates “the hypotheticality and optionality associated with if-clauses that make them likely vehicles for interpersonal functions in conversation” (P.7).

Conditionals have also been said to reflect complex psychological processes such as desirability, hypotheticality and counterfactuality (Mayes, 1994: 449-56). She quotes Akatsuka’s belief that in all languages the most

common types are “predictive conditionals” and “future temporal conditionals” both of which illustrate the importance of desirability of outcomes in their expressions. Predictive conditionals consist primarily of warnings and threats, for example:

29. *I'll give the doll to Hiba if you are not nice.*

The psychological state of the speaker in this type contrasts with that of future temporal conditionals which tend to reflect desirable outcomes likely to occur at a later time including plans and promises, for example:

30. *When you grow up, you'll be able to speak well.*

Thus, the notion of desirability may help further understand of the semantics of conditionals by allowing us to consider the speaker's intent and psychological state in producing conditional expressions.

3. Review of Related Literature:

Pedagogically, English conditionals have been widely found to be a difficult topic in English foreign language programme owing to their complex structures and functions and the variety of classification schemes used in the literature. Berent (1985) conducted two experiments comparing the comprehension and production of real, unreal, and past unreal conditional sentences. The results indicated that although past unreal conditions were the most difficult to produce, his subjects found them the easiest to comprehend; while real conditions which were the easiest to produce, were found the most difficult to comprehend (P.368).

Gordon's study (1985 – cited in Moffie, 2000: 11) examined form-function correspondence in conditional expressions of the interlanguage of an intermediate English learner. She found that when communicating the meaning of a conditional expression which had not been acquired her

subjects communicated meaning “by relying on shared information about an event’s timing even when other verb tenses were used” (Ibid.: 12).

Chou (2000) examined how the syntactic complexity of English conditionals and first language transfer influence Chinese ESL learners acquisition order of conditionals. He concluded that “Chinese ESL learners' difficulties in acquiring English conditionals were due to syntactic complexity of the target structures. However ... there was strong evidence of L1 transfer effects ... interacted with the syntactic complexity factor in Chinese participants' production of English conditionals” (PP.28-39).

Yu-Shan (2005) made a study exploring the Chinese L2 acquisition of English if-conditionals, by employing error analysis based on a form-function mapping framework. He argued that “the heavy load of content is less amenable to adequate production than the complexity of lexical shape” (P.1). The results obtained showed that the problem with conditionals “lies not in the surface forms or modals, nor in their wide range of meanings, but in associating the right form with the right meaning” (P.29).

In the same vein, Man-Fat (2005: 14) noted that Chinese learners find difficulties in differentiating the real and unreal situations; differentiating the sense of prediction, causality and inferences, and the correct tenses to express the desired meanings of conditionals.

As for Arab EFL learners, Kharma and Al-Hajjaj (1997: 137f) pointed out that the primary difficulty for Arabic speakers in expressing English conditionals was that in Arabic forms of the two verbs in the two clauses depend on each other and both verbs contribute to the semantic meaning of the sentence. Alteration of just one of these verbs may completely change the meaning of the conditional sentence. They suggested that the major

source of difficulty be the negative interference of Arabic where the most frequent conditional form is “(if) + present + present” (Ibid.).

The discussion above indicates that English conditionals have been a big obstacle to EFL learners of various languages and cultures. This problem needs careful investigation and thoughtful solution. To this end, the present study was made.

4. Purpose:

The present study sought to provide answers to one central research question and some related questions:

1. Do advanced Iraqi EFL learners at College level still find difficulty in recognizing and producing various types and aspects of English conditionals?

If the findings are positive, i.e. the learners do find difficulty, the question above leads to several sub-questions as below:

2. In what aspects of English conditionals do students find difficulty?
3. What are the possible sources of difficulty?
4. How can this problem be overcome?

5. Hypothesis:

The present study adopted the following hypotheses:

Advanced Iraqi learners of English have no real difficulty in the recognition and production of English conditionals in all their forms and functions.

6. Method:

Participants:

Two groups of participants were selected for the study. The first group included (33) third year students in the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul. The second included (35) third year students in the department of English, College of Education, University of Mosul. Repeaters and non-Iraqi students who were (6) in number were excluded. Two students refrained from participation, so that the total number was (61). Another answer sheet was discarded for convenience, so that the total number of participants were (60). Forty-three of them were female and (seventeen) were male. Their average age was (20.7). They all had studied conditionals at pre-university stage as well as at the previous stages at the Department of English in both Colleges. The participants therefore had almost the same educational background.

The rationale behind choosing third year students of English to be participants in the present study was that these students had already had sufficient chance for systematic and extensive exposure to conditionals and were supposed to have good command of them in all their forms and functions explicitly and implicitly.

The Test:

In order to measure the extent at which the subjects were able to comprehend and produce conditionals a written test was designed to elicit the verb phrases and conditional markers commonly used in forming conditionals sentences.

The test consisted of four parts: Part One was a multiple choice one. It consisted of ten items. It aimed to test the learners' ability to recognize the

appropriate conditional marker or the verb phrase in the main clause or the conditional clause.

Part Two also consisted of ten items. It aimed at testing the learners' ability to recognize and identify the implicit conditionals from other types of sentences: emphatic, concessive, comparative, declarative and imperative. Here, most of the sentences given were implicit conditionals. The addition of other types which seemed to be conditionals was to make the options of the items less suggestive. The implicit conditionals were particularly taken from Wen-Li (1983).

Part Three was a production test. It consisted of ten items. It aimed at testing the subjects' ability to combine two sentences into a conditional one using different prompts (conditional markers). Again, the aim behind giving different conditional markers was to make the options provided seem to be less suggestive. This part particularly aimed at testing the subjects' ability to construct appropriate conditional sentences with appropriate verb phrases in the main or subordinate clause.

Part Four also contained ten items and aimed at testing the subjects' ability to produce the correct verb forms on the basis of the conditional markers used, time adverbials, hints of time reference, context clues, etc. Some of the items are implicit conditionals and non-conditionals. The aim again was to avoid making the items suggestive to the correct response.

Thus, the test items were forty in all: twenty items test recognition and comprehension and twenty items test production and usage. The test was carefully designed so that one answer is appropriate in each case .(see appendix 1)

Before applying the test, its appropriateness was ensured in terms of validity. Test validity is defined as "the degree to which a test measures what it

claims, or purports to measure” (Brown, 1996: 231). Two types of validity were accounted for: content validity and construct validity.

A test is said to have content validity when it is “a representative sample of the content of whatever the test was designed to measure” (Ibid.: 233). Construct validity ensures that “the data collection and procedure is a good representation of and is consistent with current theories underlying the variables being measured” (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 88). The content validity of the test constructed in the present study was ensured by surveying the major types, functions and uses of conditionals in a number of standard books in grammar, for example Quirk et al (1985), Murphy (1996), Swan (1995) and the first version of the test was submitted to a panel of experts consisting of four university teaching staff members in the departments of English at the College of Arts and College of Education*. The jury were asked to judge whether the test items appropriately represented the various aspects of conditionals to be tested, whether the test items were properly presented in terms of wording and difficulty, and in terms of the general principles of writing language tests. They are also asked to point out whether the test as a data collection procedure was consistent with the aim and hypothesis of the present study and the whole with the current methodology used in testing similar aspects of grammar in order to ensure construct validity. Two members of the jury suggested some modifications in the wording of the test items which were taken into consideration. Apart from these suggestions, the jury agreed upon suitability of the test to actually represent the aspect of the language to be tested; the appropriateness of the test to test the aspect in question; and the conformity of the test as a data

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collection procedure with the current methodology used in testing grammatical aspects. Thus, both content and construct validities were ensured.

The reliability of the test was also ensured. Test reliability was defined by Brown (1996: 196) as “the extent to which the results can be considered consistent or stable”. In order to estimate the reliability of the to-be-applied test, a pilot study was made. A group of 15 third year students in the Department of English, College of Arts was randomly selected to do the test made. The test was administered a month before the final version of the test was applied so as to avoid test-retest effect. The correlation coefficient of the pilot study test was then calculated using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20). The test reliability coefficient was (0.79).

The final version of the test was administered on May 14, 2005. The test was scored out of forty so that each correct item received one mark.

7. Findings:

The participants' mean scores of each part of the test were first calculated separately because each was intended to test a specific area. The mean scores of each two parts were then computed together because each two parts were intended to test a particular skill: the first two tested recognition while the second two tested production of the English conditionals.

The overall results (see Appendix 2) were statistically computed using the Arithmetic Mean X. Standard Deviation (St Dev). Mean Squares (MS) and Standard Error of the Mean (SE Mean) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to measure the difference, if any, between the two groups compared. Finally, t-test was conducted to see whether or not the difference between the areas, skills or groups compared was significant.

1. To begin with, the mean scores of group A (TA) which represented the participants of the College of Arts, was (22.03) out of (40) whereas the mean scores of group B (TE) which represented the participants of the College of Education was (24.20) out of (40). These low mean scores indicate that the participants who are advanced EFL learners still find difficulty in recognition and production of conditionals. A t-test was then applied to see whether the difference between the two groups was significant as shown in Table (1) below:

Table (1)

A Comparison of the Total Mean Scores Obtained by Group A (TA) and Group B (TE).

Two sample T for TA vs TE				
	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
Ta	30	22.03	6.23	1.1
TE	30	24.20	5.26	0.96
T-Test mu TA= mu TE(vs not =): T= -1.45 P= 0.15 DF= 58				

The results indicated that the t-value obtained was (1.45) under (58) degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance was less than the tabulated t-value which was (1.671) under (60) degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This reveals that the difference between the two groups is not significant.

- (1) The second type of comparison was made within the groups. The aim is to find out where there is a difference if any between comprehension and production of the conditional within each group and as follows:

- (a) A comparison was first made between A_1 and A_2 on the one hand and A_3 and A_4 on the other. The aim was to examine whether there is, if any, a difference between the participants raw scores in comprehension and production as is shown in table (2) below:

Table (2)

A Comparison of the Comprehension and Production Mean Scores, Group A.

Two sampleT	A1+A2	vs	A3+A4		
	N		mean	stdev	SE Mean
	A1+A2	30	5.95	1.64	0.30
	A3+ A4	30	5.07	1.77	0.32
T_Test mu A1+A2 = mu A3+A4 (vs not =): T= 2.01 P=0.049 DF=58					

The table above indicates that the difference between the mean scores compared is significant, ($P = 0.49$) in favour of comprehension. The t-value obtained was (2.01) under (58) degrees of freedom of (0.05) levels of significance whereas the tabulated t-value reads (1.67) under (60) degrees of freedom at the same level of significance. This implies that the participants were better in comprehension than production of conditionals.

- (b) A comparison was then made in group B between (E_1) and (E_2) on one hand, an (E_3) and (E_4) on the other. The aim, again, is to see whether there is, if any, a significant difference between the participants' raw scores in comprehension and production of conditionals as is shown in table (3).

Table (3)

A Comparison of Comprehension and Production Mean Scores, Group B.

Two sampleT	E1+E2	vs	E3+E4		
	N		mean	stdev	SE Mean

E1+E2	30	6.32	1.53	0.28
E3+ E4	30	5.78	1.48	0.27

T_Test mu E1+E2 = mu E3+E4 (vs not =): T= 1.37 P=0.18 DF=58

Table (3) shows that the difference between the mean scores compared is non-significant ($P = 0.18$). The t-value obtained was (1.37) which is less than the tabulated t-value which reads (1.67) under the same degrees of freedom at the same level of significance. This implies that the participants find equal difficulty in the comprehension and production of conditionals.

- (2) The third type of comparison was made across groups. The aim is to see whether there is, if any, a significant difference in comprehension and/or production of conditionals across groups and as follows:
- (a) A comparison was made between $A_1 + A_2$ on the one hand and E_1 and E_2 on the other. The aim was to see examine whether the difference, if any, between the groups of comprehension level is significant. Table (4) shows the result of such comparison.

Table (4)

A Comparison of the Comprehension Mean Scores of Group A and Group B.

Two sampleT	A1+A2	vs	E1+E2		
	N	mean	Stdev	SE Mean	
	A1+A2	30	5.95	1.64	0.30
	E1+E2	30	6.32	1.53	0.28

T_Test mu A1+A2 = mu E1+E2 (vs not =): T= -0.89 P=0.38 DF=58

The results show that the difference between the two groups at the level of comprehension is not significant ($P = 0.38$) and the t-value ($T = 0.89$) is less than the calculated t-value. These findings indicate that the ability of the participants in both groups to recognize or comprehend English conditionals

is roughly the same.

- (b) The last comparison was made between A₃ and A₄ on one hand and E₃ and E₄ on the other. The aim of this comparison was to find out whether the participants of the groups compared are different in their ability to produce grammatically correct conditional sentences.

Table (5) shows the results of this comparison.

Table (5)

A Comparison of Production Mean Scores of Group A and Group B.

Two sample T for A3 vs E3

	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
A3	30	5.10	1.81	0.33
E3	30	5.70	1.64	0.30

T-Test mu A3 = mu E3 (vs not =): T= -1.35 P=0.18 DF=58

Two sample T for A4 vs E4

	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
A4	30	5.03	2.09	0.38
E4	30	5.87	1.74	0.32

T-Test mu A4 = mu E4 (vs not =): T= -1.68 P=0.099 DF=58

The results indicate that at the level of production, the differences between the two groups are not significant. The calculated t-values read (1.35), (1.68) respectively and P = 0.18, 0.099 respectively. The results imply that the two groups compared are roughly the same in their ability to produce correct conditional sentences.

8. Results and Discussion:

The findings of the study suggest that formal and semantic aspects of English conditionals have not been mastered yet. The advanced Iraqi EFL learners still commit mistakes in recognizing and producing conditionals. Thus, the hypothesis posed in the present study which reads “Advanced Iraqi Learners of English have no real difficulty in comprehension and production

of English conditionals in all their forms and functions” has to be rejected and the alternative hypothesis should be adopted. Accordingly, the results confirm the claims and results obtained by Berent (1985), Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), Chou (2000), Man-fat (2005) and Yu-Shan (2005). That English conditionals are a problematic area for non-native speakers of English.

A closer look at the findings reveals that the participants were not only weak in producing the appropriate form of conditionals in a given context but also in distinguishing the conditional markers and relations which are predictable. The participants scored lowest in the section which tested their ability to recognize implicit conditionals where no conditional markers were used. The difficulty in this area may partly be ascribed to faulty teaching of conditionals where conditionals are mechanically linked with ‘if-clause’ and partly be ascribed to native language interference where conditionals must be introduced by overt markers such as ‘itha’, ‘mann’, ‘inn’, etc.

Again, the findings clearly demonstrate that the participants scored low in the section that tested production. The difficulty, here, cannot be ascribed to the effect of the native language but to two main reasons: faulty teaching, the semantico-grammatical relations and time-tense relations in conditional sentences.

Teaching conditionals at the intermediate and advanced stages in Iraq relegates presenting conditionals to three forms in a mechanical way:

If + present, shall/will + base, e.g. If you work hard, you will succeed.

If + past, would + base, e.g. If you worked hard, you would succeed.

If + past perfect, would have + pp., e.g. If you had worked hard, you would have succeeded.

This presentation undermines the semantic dimensions of conditionals and time-tense relations.

In line with Ku (2004) the present researcher believes that the real challenge to produce the appropriate forms of English conditionals in appropriate context or situation lies in the interaction of forms (verb form changes) and meanings (temporality and hypotheticality). Temporality is time-reference relation whereas hypotheticality is related to the degree of unreality which is a kind of modality. Furthermore, time-tense relation in the conditional sentence is inconsistent. The inconsistency arises where the past tense, in expressing hypotheticality, does not behave like past tense especially in counterfactual sentences. It rather implies the speaker's scalar certainty of the probability in the protasis: it starts from uncertainty and extends to hypotheticality and finally to counterfactuality.

However, this is not the end of the picture. The present researcher believes, also, that the real problem for the advanced Iraqi EFL learners in using the appropriate conditionals in the appropriate situation does not only lie in the complexity of the interaction of form, meaning and function but also in the fact that the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules that govern the use of conditionals in Arabic are radically different from those of English. Furthermore, condition in Arabic is lexicalized, i.e. using different particles to express different semantic and pragmatic relations while condition in English is grammaticalized, i.e. using different grammatical structures to express various semantic and pragmatic relations.

To begin with, conditionals in Arabic generally refer to the future whether the verb form in the protasis is present or past. (Ibn Jinni, n.d.: 133; Al-Zarkashi, 1957: 355; Al-Qazweeni, n.d.: 93; Khalil, 1999: 284-289). The

conditional particles 'إِنْ' (inn), 'إِذَا' (itha), 'لَوْ' (lawo), etc. may change the past to future reference. Semantically, using present or past verb forms in the protasis can have the various implications:

1. The past form of the protasis indicates that the action or circumstance is recurrent whereas the present form is not frequent (Jawad, 1965: 48) as in: "مَنْ يَخَالَفُ يَطْرُدُ", "مَنْ سَارَ وَصَلَ".

Some other linguists, e.g. Al-Samaraii (1991) argue that the past may indicate that the action or event occurred once and for all while the present usually indicates a recurrent event or circumstance (P.436). For example:

(وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ) (لقمان: ١٢)
(Anyone who is (so) grateful Does so to the profit of his own soul: but if any is ungrateful, verily God is free of all wants, worthy of all praise)

(Tr. Ali)

the verb 'يشكر' is in the present because it recurs whereas 'كفر' is in the past because it occurs once and for all.

2. The past form suggests a prolonging action while present suggests casual event (Ibid.: 440). For example:

(وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا) (النحل: ١٩)
(And if ye would count the favour of Allah ye cannot reckon it)

(Tr. Pickthall)

(فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ) (البقرة: ١٩٦)
(And if ye are prevented, then send such gifts as can be obtained with ease)

(Tr. Pickthall)

3. The past form may also imply that what has been said is based on observance and long experience. For example:

إذا أنت أكرمت اللئيم تمردا وإن أنت أكرمت الكريم ملكته

If you treat the nobleman reverentially, you will win his heart; but if you treat the wicked nobly, he will become insolent.

4. The past form suggests past action if the particle “إن” (inn) is followed by ‘كان’ (kana) (Al-Radi, in Al-Samaraii, 1990: 443) as in:

(وَإِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ) (يوسف: ٢٧)

(And if his shirt is torn from behind, then she hath lied..)

(Tr. Pickthall)

Secondly, condition in Arabic is lexicalized in the sense that using different conditional marks implies different semantic implications as in the following examples:

- (a) إن (inn) is commonly used to express probability as in:

(وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْتَنَحْ لَهَا) (الأنفال: ٦١)

(But if the enemy incline towards peace, Do thou incline towards peace)

(Tr. Ali)

(B) إذا (itha) is used to imply that what follows the certain, recurrent, or will undoubtedly happen (cf. Al-Mubarrid, 1962: 65; Al-Zarkashi, 1957: 362).

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا...وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا) (المائدة: ٦)

(When ye prepare for prayer wash your faces If ye are in a state to ceremonial impurity, Bathe your whole body) (Tr. Ali)

Note that ‘itha’ was used to indicate that ceremonial impurity is infrequent and does not occur at regular intervals.

(c) لو (lawo) is used to indicate the non-occurrence of the state or action in the apodosis as a result of the non-occurrence of the state or action in the prosthesis as I the examples below:

(وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً) (المائدة: ٤٨)

(If God had so willed, he would have made you a single people) (Tr. Ali)

So the main clause is impossible in view of the if-clause.

The examples above clearly indicate that conditional marks in Arabic have semantic consequences on the relationship between the prosthesis and apodosis.

From the discussion above, the possible solution to the problem of learning conditionals at the advanced stage can be seen as follows:

1. Form, meaning and function should always be integrated when teaching conditionals. The pragmatic dimension in the form of the communicative functions should be an integral part of teaching conditionals. In addition to forms, the learner is supposed to learn the rules of use which makes a given form appropriate in a given context.
2. For advanced EFL learners, the native language can be a potential source for enhancing and promoting the foreign language. It seems therefore necessary to compare and contrast Arabic and English conditionals especially at semantic and pragmatic levels drawing the learner's attention to the different potentials each language uses to perform the same or different communicative functions.

9. Conclusion:

In the light of the results obtained the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The advanced Iraqi EFL learners still find difficulty in recognizing and producing the appropriate form of conditionals that suits the appropriate context and situation.
 2. The possible source of this difficulty lies not only in the complexity of form-function relation of conditionals but also in faulty teaching which wrongly corresponds the three typical forms of conditionals with three semantic implications. The other possible source of difficulty is that condition in Arabic is lexicalized using different particles to communicate a given meaning of condition whereas condition in English is grammaticalized using different grammatical structures to communicate different meanings.
 3. The possible solutions suggested to solve this problem are:
 - (a) Integrating form, meaning and function of conditionals.
 - (b) The pragmatic dimension of conditionals, which accounts for the intent of the speaker, the context and the situation in which the utterance is made, etc., should be part of teaching conditionals.
 - (c) Comparing and contrasting Arabic and English conditionals seem necessary to make the learner aware of the fact that each language has different strategies to perform the same function.
- As for doing further research relating to the present study, it is suggested that further related research can be done to investigate:
1. The possible effect of Arabic conditionals on learning English conditionals.
 2. The effect of integrating form, meaning and function on the advanced learners' achievement.
 3. The effect of emphasizing the pragmatic dimension in teaching on the creative use of English conditionals.

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APPENDIX 1

The Test

Dear Student: The following test aims at investigating your ability to recognize and use conditionals. Your serious and careful answering will be highly appreciated. Thank you for cooperation.

I. Choose the most appropriate options that best fill in the blanks below:

1. I'll see you tonight I have to work late.
a. if b. as long as c. unless d. although
2. You can use my car you drive carefully.
a. nonetheless b. as long as c. when d. in spite of
3. We brought some more food Sami and his family came.
a. despite to b. provided c. whether d. unless
4. Traveling by car is convenient you have a new car.
a. unless b. provided that c. as long as d. until
5. She ran quickly she would have missed the bus.
a. otherwise b. although c. if d. however
6. You get fat if you to much.
a. eat b. will eat c. will be eating d. would eat
7. If you this form, I'll have your luggage taken up to your room.
a. may fill in b. will fill in c. can fill in d. filled in
8. We would appreciate it if you so kind to have your check be returned.
a. would be b. would have been c. were d. will be
9. If I understand both of them correctly, Sami and his uncle together.
a. may live b. can live c. will live d. would live
10. I in case Nada phoned.
a. wouldn't go out b. shan't go out c. hadn't gone out d. didn't go out

II. State whether the following sentences are implicit conditionals, comparatives, concessives or imperatives:

1. Another word and he might struck her.
2. We shall go, weather permitting.
3. A live, he might have acted differently.

4. Out of sight, out of mind.
5. That drug provided him with the energy he needed.
6. We'll play tennis tomorrow provided that it's not raining.
7. Luma looked as if she was worried.
8. Hurry up else you'll be late for the lecture.
9. In case of fire, please leave the building as quickly as possible.
10. Let me know whenever she gets back.

III. Combine each two of the following sentences using the prompts between brackets so as to form single sentence.

1. Stand up here. Then you can see the stream clearly. (if)
2. Stand up. Otherwise you won't be able to see anything. (unless)
3. I'll let you come with me on one condition. You must do exactly what I tell you.
(on condition that)
4. I'll draw a map for you. It is possible that you can't find my house. (in case)
5. She was awake. She certainly hear that blast. (if)
6. Children are not allowed to swim in the river. They are allowed to when they are
with an adult.
7. She studies hard. She will pass the exam. (providing)
8. I don't care coming late. You come in quietly. (as long as)
9. It is done. It matters not how. (so that)
10. Your father saw you. What would he say? (suppose)

IV. Rewrite the following statements putting the verbs in brackets in the most appropriate form.

1. The sheep might run away if you (not pat) them.
2. If she had not driven so fast, then she (not get) here in time.
3. You are not allowed into the club unless you (be) a member.
4. I am leaving now unless you (want) me to say.
5. She is going to take some chocolate in case she (get) hungry.
6. Provided that she studied hard, she (pass) her exams.
7. If the traffic light (be) red then you must stop.
8. Luma would have taken a vocation if she (have) the money.
9. We (go) on a picnic, weather permitting.
10. A nation (be) died in a fortnight if it stopped working.

Appendix 2

The participants' Raw scores in the Achievement Test

	A	A	A	A	T	E	E	E	E	T
1.					1					2
2.					2					2
3.					2					2
4.					1					2
5.					2					2
6.					2					1
7.	1				3					2
8.					1					2
9.										2
10.					2					2
11.					2					2
12.					1					2
13.					1				1	3
14.					1					2
15.					2	1				3
16.					2	1	1			3
17.					3					1
18.	1				2					2
19.					1					2
20.				1	3					2
21.					2					1
22.					2					3
23.	1				3					2
24.					1					2
25.					1					2
26.					2					2
27.					2					1
28.					2					2
29.					2	1				3
30.					1					1

Where:

A1 = scores of question NO.1 of the recognition test obtained by the College of Arts subjects.

A2= scores of question NO.2 of the recognition test obtained by the College of Arts subjects.

A3= scores of question NO.3 of the production test obtained by the College of Arts subjects.

A4= scores of question NO.4 of the production test obtained by the College of Arts subjects.

TA= Total scores obtained by the College of Arts subjects in recognition and production test.

E1= scores of question NO.1 of the recognition test obtained by the College of Education subjects.

E2= scores of question NO.2 of the recognition test obtained by the College of Education subjects.

E3= scores of question NO.3 of the production test obtained by the College of Education subjects.

E4= scores of question NO.4 of the production test obtained by the College of Education subjects.

TE= Total scores obtained by the College of Education subjects in recognition and production test.

