

## Subjunctive Mood in English & Arabic

### "Contrastive study"

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### Abstract:

In this research the subjunctive mood in both Arabic and English has been tackled , and we spoke about the importance of this mood .The verb forms used with the subjunctive mood in both languages also have been tackled .

Besides, we highlighted the particles used with subjunctive mood in Arabic rather than in English , and notified the multi – uses of subjunctive mood in English . Then made a contrastive study of the subjunctive mood in English and Arabic , in which we clarified the points of similarities and differences of the subjunctive mood in both languages .

صيغة الشرط والتمني والدعاء في الانكليزية وصيغة المضارع  
المنصوب في العربية  
(دراسة مقارنة)

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### ملخص البحث:

تناولنا في هذا البحث صيغ الشرط والتمني والدعاء في اللغة الانكليزية وصيغة المضارع المنصوب في اللغة العربية كما وتحدثنا عن مدى أهمية هذه الصيغة .

حيث تناولنا أشكال الفعل التي تدخل عليها هذه الصيغة في كلتا اللغتين والأدوات التي تستخدم في اللغة العربية ولا تستخدمها اللغة الانكليزية ، وسلطنا الضوء على الاستخدامات الواسعة لهذه الصيغة باللغة الانكليزية ومن ثم أجرينا دراسة مقارنة لها في كلا اللغتين وبيننا أوجه الاختلاف والتشابه بينهما.

## 1. Introduction

In grammar, mood is a category of verb use , typically expressing fact (indicative mood) , command (imperative mood) , question (interrogative mood), wish (optative mood) or conditionality (subjunctive mood).(Pearsall . J.1989 : 1849) .

Subjunctive mood- that will be tackled in this paper- in Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary is defined as : that mood of a verb used to express condition , hypothesis , contingency , possibility .....etc, rather than to state an actual fact : distinguished from imperative and indicative .

In grammar subjunctive mood is that form of a verb which expresses the action or state not as a fact , but only as a conception of the *mind* still contingent and dependent . It is commonly subjoined , or added as *subordinate* , to some other verbs , and in English it is often connected with it, by, if , that , though , less s, unless , except , until .....etc ,as in the following :

1. If there were no honey , they (bees) would have no object in visiting the flower .(see Wikipedia, 2007: 1-2).

## 2. Aim:

This paper aims at investigating subjunctive mood and its usage in both English and Arabic . Points of similarities and differences will be tackled and discussed thoroughly through giving examples in both languages as the need arises .

### **3. Hypothesis :**

It is hypothesized that when contrasting subjunctive mood in two languages there would appear certain aspects as common to both languages , and others as peculiar to each of them . Thus , the study hypothesizes that English and Arabic are similar in some aspects and different in others .

## **4. Subjunctive Mood in English**

Some experts agree that subjunctive mood appears to vanish in common usage . Earlier in the twentieth century , grammarians and linguists proclaimed the subjunctive's death and argued that this was no big loss , as its historical role in English had been weak and inconsistent; some even went so far as to say that in modern English its usage is " pretentious". The fools ! the subjunctive mood is valuable competent of English language .(see Wikipedia 2007 : 3-4)

### **4.1. Categories of subjunctive Mood**

(a) the mandative subjunctive in that – clauses has only one form , the base (V) ; this means there is lack of regular indicative concord between subject and finite verb in the 3 rd person singular present , and the present and past tenses are indistinguishable . This subjunctive can be used with any verb in subordinate that – clauses when the main clauses contain an expression of recommendation , resolution , demand , and so on (we demand , require , move , insist, suggest , ask , etc that ...).

The use of this subjunctive occurs chiefly in formal style (and especially in AmE) where in less formal contexts one would rather make use of other devices , such as to- infinitive or should + infinitive :

2. It is / was necessary that every member inform him self of these rules.

3. It is necessary for every member to inform himself of these rules .

(b) The formulaic subjunctive also consists of the base (v) but is only used in clauses in certain set expressions which have to be learned as wholes .

4. God save the Queen

(c) The subjunctive "*were*" is hypothetical in meaning and used in conditional and concessive clauses and in subordinate clauses after optative verbs like wish .

It occurs as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular past of the verb *be* , matching the indicative *was* which is the more common in less formal style :

5. I wish I { *were* / *was* } dead .

It is to be noted that only *were* is acceptable in ' As it were ' (= so to speak) ; *were* is unusual in :

6. If I were you .(see Quirk 1989 : 58-59)

## 4..2. Tenses Of Subjunctive Mood

The conjugation of this mood becomes a significantly more complex matter when used in different tenses. However, casual spoken English rarely uses the subjunctive, and generally restricts the conditional mood to the simple present and simple past.

The terms *present* subjunctive and *past* subjunctive can be misleading, as they describe *forms* rather than *meanings* : the past and present subjunctives are so called because they resemble the past and present indicative , respectively , but the difference between them is a modal one , not a temporal one .

For example in :

7. " I asked that it *be done* yesterday " .

*Be done* (a present subjunctive) has no present – tense sense , and likewise, in the clause:

8. "if that *were* true , I'd know it " , *were* (a past subjunctive) has no past tense sense .

From the two following sentences we can show the present and past subjunctive mood :

9. Mr. Meadows wished that Miss Durkin be there .

10. Mr. Meadows wished that Miss Durkin were there . .(Roberts,1968: 331- 334).

In the first sentence , with *be* , *wished* has a sense of *request or suggestion*. Mr. Meadows expressed the wish and Miss Durkin turned up . But in the second sentence , with *were* , Mr. Meadows is wishing for something that didn't happen . Miss Durkin wasn't there , but Mr. Meadows wished she were .

But the only formal difference in the two sentences is that between *be* and *were* .In the first sentence ,*be* is the subjunctive form of *be* for the present tense . In the second , *were* is the subjunctive form of *be* for the past tense. *Were* is the subjunctive past tense form whatever the subject is . We don't say \* " Miss Durkin were here " , but we do say " I wish Miss Durkin were here " .(Ibid)

In modern English the form of the subjunctive is distinguishable from the indicative in only three circumstances :

- a. in the third person singular of the present indicative ,
- b. with the verb to be in the present tense and
- c. in the first person singular and third person singular of the verb *to be* in the past tense .

Additionally , the modal auxiliaries don't have present subjunctive forms .Other than the verb to be, the past subjunctive is distinguishable

from the past indicative Early Modern English in the second- person singular , for example :

- indicative thou **sattest** , but subjunctive thou **sat** . We can clarify these circumstances in Fig . 1 (Wikipedia 2007 : 6-8)

	<b>Present indicative</b>	<b>Present subjunctive</b>	<b>Past indicative</b>	<b>Past subjunctive</b>
<b>To own</b> (regular verb)	I own He/she/it <b>owns</b> We own You own They own	I own He/she/it <b>own</b> We own You own They own	I owned He/she/it owned We owned You owned They owned	I owned He/she/it owned We owned You owned They owned
<b>To be</b>	I <b>am</b> He/she/it <b>is</b> We <b>are</b> You <b>are</b> They <b>are</b>	I <b>be</b> He/she/it <b>be</b> We <b>be</b> You <b>be</b> They <b>be</b>	I <b>was</b> He/she/it <b>was</b> We were You were They were	I <b>were</b> He/she/it <b>were</b> We were You were They were

### 4.3. Future subjunctive:

A future subjunctive can be constructed by using " were " plus the infinitive, for example:

11. If I were to die tomorrow , you would inherit every thing .
  12. If you were to give me the money , I would say no more about it .
- (Ibid)

### 4.4. Uses of Subjunctive mood :

#### 1. *The pluperfect subjunctive* :

Since the past "subjunctive " is not a true past tense , it is use as its past tense what is structurally its *perfect aspect form* . This past tense is known as the past perfect subjunctive or pluperfect subjunctive ; it is

formed using *had* (the past subjunctive of to have) plus the *past participle form* of the verb .

The pluperfect subjunctive is used like the past subjunctive except that it expresses a past – tense sense , for example :

13. If I had seen you , I definitely would have said hello .

14. I wouldn't behave if he hadn't helped me .

## **2. Construction by Inversion:**

Where the subjunctive is used after " If " in a counter actual condition , the same effect can be achieved by omitting " If" and inverting a verb and subject . For example :

15. If I were the president .../ were I the president ..?

16. If he had a car with him .../ Had he a car with him ...?

## **3. Construction Using Modal Verb:**

The subjunctive mood can be expressed using the modal verbs "shall" (should) and "may" (might) . For example :

17. I recommend that he (should) be taken away .

18. May the Lord bless you and keep you .

19. He wrote it in his diary so that he(might) remember .

## **4. Set Phrases :**

It is used in certain " fossilized" expressions . It is known as formulaic subjunctive . Here the base of the verb is used .For example :

20. God save the country .

21. So be it .(Ibid)

## **5. To Express a Command :**

Content clauses expressing commands, requests, or suggestions commonly use the present subjunctive ; such clauses may be introduced

by a verbs like *propose* , *suggest* , *recommend* , *move* (in the parliamentary) , demand or mandate , by an adjective like imperative , important , adamant or necessary , or by a noun like insistence or proposal .

It is worth mentioning that the present subjunctive is used in this case regardless of the actual time reference (which must be conveyed by the tense of the main verb):

22. I *move(d)* that the bill *be put* to a vote .

23. I asked that he *be shown* mercy .

24. It is (or was) necessary that we not forget over instructions .

25. Her insistence that he leave seems (or seemed) rude .(see Thomson and Martinet, 2001 : 253-63)

Some of these words have two senses : the first one introduces a clause in the indicative , and the second introduces a clause in the subjunctive . For example , *insist* can mean assert *forcefully* and *persistently* , in which case it introduces the indicative (he insisted that *he* was innocent) or it can mean demand *forcefully* and *persistently* in which case it introduces the subjunctive (he insisted that he *be* given the chance to prove it) .(Wikipedia, 2005 : 4-5)

## 6. To Express Wish :

The past subjunctive is used after the verb *to wish*, for example :

26. I wish he *were* here or I *wished* he *were* there .

## 7.To Express hypothesis :

The past subjective is used after the conjunctive *if* in a contrary – to– fact protasis , for example :

27. If I were a millionaire , I would buy a sports car .



In the same vein , the past subjunctive is used following the conjunctions *as if* and *as though* to express a contrary –to- fact situation that reality is supposed to resemble :

28. He tried to explain it – *as if* he know any thing about the subject .
29. She looked as though she were going to kill him , but after glaring for abit , she just stormed off .

### 8. To Express a purpose :

The present subjunctive is used following the conjunction *lest* to express a negative possibility , and (*so*) *that* to express positive purpose , for example :

30. I eat *lest* die .
31. He wrote it in his dairy *so that* he remember .

### 9. Hypercorrect usage :

The subjunctive has sometimes been used simply as a conditioned variant that follows "if" and similar words even in the absence of a hypothetical situation . For example :

32. Johnny asked me if I were afraid .(Barbara in Night of the Living Dead (1968)) .

In this example "*if*" is a substitute for the ambiguous word "*whether*" (Johnny asked me whether I was afraid) , and lacks the usual , "in the event that " meaning that it has in other usage such as "if we go to be now , we'll be up at three o'clock" .

### 10. Demise of The Subjunctive :

In many dialects of English , the indicative can take the place of the subjunctive , although this is sometimes considered erroneous in formal or educated speech and writing , for example :

33. If I was the president.....

34. If he was a ghost).....

#### 11. *To express Doubt or Supposition:*

The subjunctive is sometimes used after other conjunctions to express doubt or supposition , although this usage is nowadays more often replaced by the indicative . For example :

35. I will not let thee go , except(= unless) thou bless me . (Old Testament) .

36. Murder , though it have no tongue , will speak .(Ibid)

### 5. *The subjunctive mood in Arabic*

In Arabic the subjunctive mood is confined to the imperfect . It is used in the subordinate clauses and follows certain particles (النواصب) which are said to govern the verb in the subjunctive .(see Aziz, 1989: 81)

The subjunctive mood occurs only in subordinate clauses . It indicates an act which is dependent upon what is mentioned in the previous clause, and it is governed by many particles .

a. The subjunctive of the imperfect (المضارع المنصوب) has always a future

sense after the particle لن and the conjunction أن that , لا or ألا

that not , كي and لكي that , لا كي and كيلا that not , حتى , until ,

and ل that ; as

37. لن يدخل الجنة إلا من كان هوداً أو نصارى

None shall enter Paradise except those who are Jews or Christians

38. أم حسبتم أن تدخلوا الجنة

Do you think that you shall enter Paradise (see Wright 1971: p24).  
The conjunct أن that, comes after verbs which express inclination  
disinclination , order or prohibition , duty , effect , effort , fear necessity ,  
permission , etc. ; as

39. أردت وأوجبت أن أبين لهم طريق التعلم.

I wished and desired to make plain to them the path of learning

40. لا يأبى كاتب أن يكتب.

Let no one who can write , refuse to write

41. قال فأهبط منها فما يكون لك أن تتكبر فيها.

He (God) . said Get thee down then from it (Paradise) , for it is not  
for thee to behave with pride in it .

42. أمرتك أن تفعل كذا.

I command thee to do such a thing

43. ما منعك أن لاتسجد.

What hath hindered thee from worshipping (him)? (see Wright  
1971:p 24-25) .

If we wish to indicate that the thing ordered or resolved upon has  
actually been done , the verb may be followed by أن with the perfect as :

44. انه تعالى لما قدر أن أحياها أولا قدر أن يحيها ثانيا.

After God had decreed to call them to life for the first time (as he  
did) , He decreed to call them to life a second time (Ibid)

**b. حتى.**

It means "until" when it is followed by a verb in the past tense.  
When it is followed by a verb in the present tense it will express purpose

and, therefore, means "in order to/so that." In that case, the verb should be in the subjunctive mood.

45. لن تنالوا البر حتى تنفقوا مما تحبون

c. لا

Verbs in the present tense are negated by (لا) .

46. لا نُنشاهدُ هذا الفلم . We do not watch/see this movie.

d. In addition to (لـ), other particles of subjectivity which express purpose/intention and, thus, mean "in order to, so that." include  
كي ، لكي -

47. سافروا إلى مصرَ لِيُدرِسوا هُنَاكَ

They (may) travelled to Egypt in order to study there.

The original form of the underlined verb is:

(يُدرسون) (Ibid)

e. This particle expresses a cause , and is known as (فاء السببية) as :

48. لا تقل ذلك فَنَتَدَم

Don't say that lest you should be sorry

f. أو Particle (unless that , until)

49. لَأَسْتَسهِلَ الصَّعْبَ أَوْ أَدْرِكَ الْمُنَى

- I'll consider all difficult things easy until I attain my aim

(In that ease, well then . This particle expresses a result or consequences and

g. إذن governs the verb in the subjunctive mood if it follows immediately , as:

50. سأدفع لك الثمن اليوم – إذن سأرسل لك البضاعة في الحال

I'll pay you today . well then , I'll send the goods at once .(see Aziz 1989 :p 82)

## 6. Comparison between the Subjunctive Mood in Arabic & English

1. Subjunctive mood in English is formally specified (the verb form) , while in Arabic it is determined by the subjunctive governors:

أن ، الأ ، ل ، لئلا ، كي ، كي لا ، لان ، حتى ، لن .....ألخ

These particles inflect the verbs following them by Al- Nasb, therefore , the Arabic verb mood is functionally specified .

2. All the particles used to indicate the subjunctive mood in Arabic imply the future meaning , while in English the future subjunctive can be constructed by using "were" plus the infinitive .
3. In English subjunctive mood appears mainly in subordinate clauses, but this is not necessarily the case in Arabic , except the particle (لن) .
4. In both languages, subjunctive mood refers to future actions, i.e. the time reference is converted to a point after the moment of speaking.
5. Subjunctive mood in both Arabic and English is strongly related to the notion of modality as a means of expressing the speaker's attitude rather than a notion related formally to the modal verbs.
6. Subjunctive mood in both Arabic and English expresses some basic meanings which include futurity, emphasis, causation in Arabic, and hypothetical and nonfactual mainly in English. In both languages negation can be expressed as well.

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