

# There is no subjunctive in English

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## ***Abstract***

The western classical tradition identifies three moods: indicative, subjunctive, imperative. Protagoras split the indicative into interrogative and declarative. Palmer 2001, 2003 argues for only two: indicative and subjunctive. Given any of these classifications of mood, English has no category of mood and so has no subjunctive. Instead it has certain clause-types which express hypotheticality and which can be subsumed to the irrealis branch of the apparently universal category realis~irrealis; the same irrealis branch to which subjunctives, optatives, jussives, and the like can also be subsumed. There are some mood-like operators in English which represent the primary illocutions of major (and traditional) clause-types such as **T**[ $\Phi$ ], declarative, **Q**[ $\Phi$ ], interrogative, and **I**[ $\Phi$ ], imperative. A very small set of just two English hypotheticals contrast with these three major clause-types and I discuss these under the rubric of ‘independent hypotheticals’, **H**[ $\Phi$ ]. Otherwise, English hypotheticals, often described as subjunctives or optatives (even in works like Huddleston and Pullum’s 2002 *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*) all fall within the scope of the major clause-types (e.g. **I**[**H**[*Should Tom call*], *tell him I’ll get back to him tomorrow*]).

## ***Key words***

Clause-type, Declarative, Illocutionary Force, Imperative, Interrogative, Irrealis, Mood, Primary Illocution, Realis, Subjunctive

## Preamble<sup>1</sup>

I hold that recognizing the clause-type(s) is the first step towards discovering the illocutionary point of an utterance via the primary illocution (PI). **The PI is the semantic property of the clause-type.** For instance, the PI of *I'll see you at 10* is a statement (with a potential truth value); the statement makes a prediction about Speaker's future behaviour which, entering the pragmatic domain, constitutes a commissive; in turn this commissive may be a promise or a threat depending on several contextual factors (e.g. it may be an unwelcome mand). The PI is the crucial semantic basis for the pragmatic inferencing that leads to Hearer inferring the illocutionary point of (Speaker's message in) the utterance containing the clause, in the manner first described in Searle 1975 (see also Bach and Harnish 1979, Allan 1986; 2001). The PI for statements, symbolized **T**[ $\Phi$ ] can be lexicalized to "It is true that"; the PI for interrogatives, symbolized **Q**[ $\Phi$ ] can be lexicalized "It is asked:"; the PI for imperatives, **I**[**F**[ $\Phi$ ]] "It is directed/entreated that you";<sup>2</sup> the expressive **X**[IDIOM] and exclamatives may occur within the scope of any of these, e.g. **Q**[!*He what*]]. In Allan 2006 I describe formal defining characteristics for declarative, interrogative, imperative, hypothetical, expressive and exclamative clause-types and subsentences in English in terms of the morphosyntactic, lexical, and prosodic characteristics of their formal presentation and their characteristics as main and subordinate clauses and under negation. The three major clause-types of declarative, interrogative, and imperative are always in mutual contrast formally, and their primary illocutions, **T**, **Q**, **I**, are similarly distinct; but from a pragmatic viewpoint, the illocutionary point of an utterance in one major clause type may have the force normally attributed to literal use of one of the others by exploiting the common ground (context) and implicature. I shall not further discuss expressives or exclamatives, and I shall be elaborating on hypotheticals in the body of this paper. I shall discuss mood, then hypotheticals, and two structures that might plausibly count as subjunctives (or, rather, optatives) – though I call them 'hypotheticals'. The remainder of the paper proceeds to examine English constructions that contain less and less clear-cut examples of a hypothetical PI.

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1. I am grateful for the comments of two anonymous reviewers without whom this paper would have an even greater number of infelicities.

2. There is a list of abbreviations and symbols in an appendix at the end of the article.

## Mood

On a mixture of formal and semantic grounds the western classical tradition identifies three moods: indicative, subjunctive, imperative – respectively described as the ‘fact-mood’, the ‘thought-mood’, and the ‘will-mood’ by Jespersen 1958: 313; Jespersen 1909–1949 VII: 623. This ternary division does not work for English because either there is no subjunctive, or else subjunctives are also found within indicatives. Furthermore, Protagoras (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) split the indicative into interrogative and declarative (Diogenes Laertius 1925, Book IX). Palmer 2001; 2003 recognizes only two moods in European classical languages: indicative and subjunctive, which he compares with the realis~irrealis division proposed for some Native American and Papuan languages (Chafe 1995, Mithun 1995; 1999; Roberts 1990); and also with the assertive~non-assertive division proposed by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech et al. 1985, Wierzbicka 1988, Lunn 1995. Although Palmer identifies only two moods, he discusses interrogatives, imperatives, jussives, prohibitives, exclamatives, and a few other mood-like categories; Palmer does not clarify their status with respect to one another, or with his binary mood system. Palmer (2001: 104, 201f; 2003: 3f) denies that English has a subjunctive; but Lowth 1763, Buchanan 1767, Jespersen 1958, Jespersen 1909–1949; 1958 VII, §18, Givón 1994, Övergaard 1995, Huddleston and Pullum 2002, among many others, would disagree.

Whatever stance one takes, the relationships among clause-types (and corresponding subsentences), moods and illocutions are controversial. English does not fit a binary system of mood any better than it matches a ternary system. In fact the traditional term *mood* does not adequately fit what we find, even if we were to admit a plethora of minor moods (as in e.g. Harnish 1994; Harnish 1983). In a nutshell, that is the reason for claiming that English has no subjunctive.

## Hypotheticals

English does have **hypotheticals**. Hypotheticals are irrealis (–R).

The realis [+R] portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception. The irrealis [–R] portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination. (Mithun 1999: 173)

Cross-linguistically there is a cline between a basket of overlapping categories indicative/realis/assertive at one pole and another basket comprised of such categories as subjunctive/hypothetical/irrealis/uncertain at the other (cf. Givón 1994; Wehmeier 2004).

All languages have a declarative as the most frequent and least marked clause-type (cf. Jespersen 1958: 318); its PI is symbolized **T**, because its token potentially bears a truth value. The declarative is typically +R (though it may include a hypothetical, **H**, as we shall see). At the opposite extreme are hypotheticals, counterfactuals, intensionals, traditional subjunctives, and other –R categories for which there is often no unique morphology. Between the extremes

of +R and –R are strung interrogatives, imperatives, negatives, futures, and habituais which may align with either +R or –R categories. For instance the negative clause *Jim is not here* describes an event such that the utterance can be seen as a factual statement having a truth value; and therefore aligned with **T**, +R; alternatively, it is a counter-fact aligned with –R categories. Thus in Spanish, (1) is **T** (+R) but the negative (2) is normally subjunctive (–R) (cf. Travis 2003).

- (1) Pienso que está dormida.  
I.think that 3S.be asleep.FEM  
“I think she is asleep.”
- (2) No pienso que esté dormida.  
not I.think that 3S.be.SJV asleep.FEM  
“I don’t think she is asleep.”

An interesting case from Old English is: *Nu cwædon gedwolmen þæt deofol gesceope sume gesceafta ac hi leogað* ‘now said heretics that Devil created.SJV some creatures but they lie’ (Ælfric *Homilies* I.16.19, quoted in Traugott 1972: 100): the subjunctive (–R) signals a nonfactual statement – a lie.<sup>3</sup> A question *Who is that?* has no truth value (*\*It is true that who is that*), thus it can align with –R categories; but in the western classical tradition it is indicative and aligned with **T** as +R. The –R categories in English include:

- Futures (**F**)
- Imperatives (**I**)
- Infinitives (*V* and *to V*)
- Complements of mandative and optative predicates
- Deontics (*must, ought to, should*)
- Hypotheticals (**H**)

The future is –R because it is not, in Mithun’s words, ‘actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception’; that is why in many languages the future, especially less certain futures, are marked by a modal. However the future is not subjunctive: the irreality is temporal rather than other worldly. With deontics and hypotheticals the irreality is a different world  $w^h$  accessible from the world in which the utterance takes place,  $w^o$ , but none the less hypothetical.

Although these brief explanations oversimplify the distinction between different types of irreality, they suggest how one might set about explaining the forms expressing the different –R properties.

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3. A reviewer suggested that the subjunctive might be a function of it being reported speech.

## Independent hypotheticals

There is a handful of readily identifiable irrealis clauses where the hypothetical stands in contrast to the three major clause-types; and, if the declarative, interrogative and imperatives were moods, it would be proper to call this the subjunctive (or perhaps optative) mood.

- (3) a. Would that I were rich. ↔  
       **H**[**N**[Would that [I am rich]]].  
 b. Would that I weren't rich. ↔  
       **H**[**N**[Would that ¬[I am rich]]]  
 c. \*Wouldn't that I were rich. ↔  
       \*¬**H**[**N**[Would that [I am rich]]]

*Would* looks like a past tense, but is in fact indicating an independent hypothetical, **H**, that is semantically present, **N**. It carries the root meaning<sup>4</sup> of *will* expressing a desire, determination, or choice; it lives on in the main verb *I will that*, the noun in *it is my will that* and in the adjective *wilful*. A paraphrase of (3)a, [*As I speak*] *I would have it that I were rich*, does (potentially) have a truth value and so is declarative (but also hypothetical, as we shall see); However, the same cannot be said of (3)a itself or (3)b. Therefore they cannot fall within the scope of **T**. Nor is there any reason to assume that the sentences of (3) fall within the scope of **Q** or **I**. *Would that ...* sentences are not declarative, interrogative, or imperative; they are hypothetical. There is circumstantial evidence in their use as translations of subjunctives in other languages, e.g. Palmer's translation of the Latin subjunctive in a quote from Catullus:

- (4) *utinam ne tetigissent litora puppes*  
 that not touch.3PL.**PP**.SJV shores ships  
 “Would that their ships had not touched the shore” (Palmer 2001: 132)

And this example from Apollonius Dyscolus 1981:

- (5) *graphoi Dionusios* [III: 25]  
 write.SJV Dionysius  
 “Would that Dionysius write!”

This independent hypothetical *would* is a descendant of the Old and Middle English subjunctive *wald(e)*, which by early modern English was *wold* or *would*.

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4. Here ‘root’ ≈ ‘dynamic’ in Palmer 2001, 2003.

The independent hypothetical *would* in (3) has two other strange properties. First, *would* is a subjectless main verb<sup>5</sup> that expresses a desire, determination, or choice to which Speaker subscribes. The complement clause is always –R and normally hypothetical. It may be past tense, as in (4) and in *Would to God I had never laid eyes on him*; present, as in (3); or future as in *Would that he will love his own children, in time to come*. The second strange property is that the independent hypothetical main verb *would* cannot be negated. This parallels the impossibility of negating the outermost PI operators **T**, **Q** and **I** because it is impossible to deny the primary illocutionary force of a clause-type except metatextually: their would-be negations are lexicalized as negative declarative clauses along the lines of *I'm not asserting that  $\Phi$* , **T**[–[I say [**T**[ $\Phi$ ]]]], *I'm not asking whether  $\Phi$* , **T**[–[I ask [**Q**[ $\Phi$ ]]]], *I'm not entreating/demanding that ...* etc. These are metatextual assertions of what the speaker is not-doing! Similarly, denying the outer hypothetical in (3)a yields a declarative something like *I'm not wishing that I were rich*, **T**[–[I hypothecate [**H**[ $\Phi$ ]]]].<sup>6</sup>

Another independent hypothetical construction that contrasts with declarative, interrogative and imperative is exemplified in (6). Once again, the initial root modal verb functions as a main verb and it cannot be negated: the words in (6)d can function as a question, but not as a negation of (6)a.

- (6) a. May you be blessed with many children. ↔  
**H**[**N**[May **F**[you be blessed with many children]]].
- b. May he rot in hell! ↔  
**H**[**N**[May **F**[he rot in hell!]]]
- c. May you not be blessed with any children. ↔  
**H**[**N**[May **F**[–[you be blessed with any children]]]]]
- d. \*Mayn't you be blessed with any children. ↔  
\*–**H**[**N**[May **F**[you be blessed with any children]]]

(6) are blessings and curses that are not declaratives; there is no commitment to a truth value in either the world spoken in or some hypothetical world. They are intuitively similar to imperatives in wanting some event brought about, yet they are certainly distinct from non-hypothetical imperatives like *Be damned!* and *Rot in hell!* There is a similarity in meaning

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5. 'Main verb' in contrast to the auxiliary uses. Whatever its history, it is not auxiliary here.

6. The common meaning of the verb *hypothecate* is "pledge as security". However, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see the *OED*) it has been used (? misused) in the sense I clearly intend here "conjecture, hypothesize, speculate, suppose, theorize".

between (6)b and *Let him rot in hell!* but (6)b exhibits subject-auxiliary inversion instead of subject-to-object raising. (6) are making some sort of request to the gods. They paraphrase as prayers, hopes, or wishes:

- (6)' a. I pray that you may be blessed with many children.  
 b. I hope he rots in hell.

Once again, there is circumstantial evidence for hypothetical meaning in the use of main verb *may* in translations of optatives or subjunctives from other languages; (7) from Apollonius Dyscolus 1981 and (8)–(11) from Palmer 2001: 132.

- (7) peripatoiē Truphōn [I: 51]  
 walk.OPT Trypho  
 “May Trypho walk”
- (8) Ut illum ... di perduint [Latin, Plautus]  
 that him gods destroy.3PL.N.SJV  
 “May the gods destroy him”
- (9) Dio vi benedica [Italian]  
 God you.PL bless.3S.N.SJV  
 “May God bless you.”
- (10) Venha o dia [Portuguese]  
 Come.3S.N.SJV the day  
 “May the day come!”
- (11) Njuutaa balde [Fula, Arnott 1970]  
 be.long.2S.SJV in.days  
 “May you live long!”

Independent hypothetical root *may* is not backshifted, but derives from the subjunctive form of the Old English *mæȝ*. The clause subordinated to independent hypothetical *may* takes the bare verb form reminiscent of the imperative and jussive; it is the same as is found in interrogatives with *may*, such as epistemic *May they be on their way, do you think?* and deontic *May he come to my party?* as well as the root sense (“does she have the power to”) in the ambiguous *May the minister, at her discretion, approve such a document?* The (semantic) tense of the subordinate clause can be future as in (6), present as in (12)a or past as in (12)b.

- (12) a. **H**[**N**[May **N**[he be safe now]]]  
 b. May he have been saved from drowning. ↔  
**H**[**N**[May **P**[he be saved from drowning]]]

The PI of an independent hypothetical is defined as follows.

<form> **H**[ $\Phi$ ] where  $\Phi$  is either *Would that S* or *May S* in which *Would* and *May* are main verbs using the root senses of these modals, and in which neither *Would* nor *May* can be negated.

<description> Speaker vehemently wishes (hence the root senses) that the proposition in S may (or may have) come about in some hypothetical world accessible from the real world in which the utterance takes place. Independent hypotheticals have no truth value, nor any value applicable to interrogatives or imperatives.

<precondition> Speaker has some reason to wish that S may (or may have) come about.

<illocutionary intention> Speaker reflexively intends the clause to be taken as a reason for Hearer to believe that Speaker vehemently wishes that S may (or may have) come about in some hypothetical world.

## Conditional hypotheticals

*Would that S* and *May S* in (3)–(12) do not function as modal auxiliaries, even if there is no escaping that they feature root modal verbs. Palmer 2001 relegates the ‘so-called subjunctive in English’ to a function of certain modal verbs and dependent clauses. Certainly, most English hypotheticals do not contrast with **T**, **Q**, and **I**, but fall within dependent clauses in the scope of one of these PI operators whose illocutions they modify to apply to hypothetical worlds: thus there is the (potentially) truth bearing irrealis *I would have it that I were rich*, **T**[...**H**[ $\Phi$ ]]. For instance, there are some auxiliary-like hypotheticals used in the protasis of conditionals that have no *if* marker, (13)–(17). Note that the hypothetical precedes the subject NP, yet these are not interrogative clauses.

- (13) *Would Harold come to the party, I’d be delighted.*
- (14) *Were Harold to come to the party, I’d be delighted.*
- (15) *Should Harold come to the party, I’d be delighted.*
- (16) *Should Harold have come to the party, I’d have been delighted.*
- (17) *Had Harold come to the party, I’d have been delighted.*

In (14) *were* derives from the Old English past subjunctive *wǣre*. What looks today like backshifting from the present is a means of marking hypothetical use. In (15)–(16) *should* descends from a line of backshifted hypotheticals stretching back to Old English. The backshifted *had* as a marker of the hypothetical in (17) appears to have arisen more recently.



To maintain this theme, the somewhat archaic (13) retains the root sense of *would* and when rephrased using *if* has to be recast as something like (13)' which loses *would* from the protasis while retaining it in the apodosis. (14)–(17) can be rephrased with *if* by swapping the sequence of modal and subject NP on the pattern of (14)'.

(13)' If Harold were willing to come to the party, I'd be delighted

(14)' If Harold were to come to the party, I'd be delighted.

In (13)–(15) the apodosis, instead of being overtly hypothetical, could be future (and so still –R but more certain) with epistemic *will*, e.g. *Were Harold to come to the party, I will be delighted*. The future of the apodosis matches the future time invoked in the protasis. When the protasis is a semantic present, the hypothetical apodosis is permissible, but not a future:

(18) a. Were I rich right now, I'd be happy [right now].

b. Were I rich right now, \*I will be happy [right now].

(16)–(17) are past tense, and the protasis proclaims (represents itself as rather than IS) a counterfactual; thus it is possible to find perfectly coherent sequences like *Had Harold come to the party, I'd have been delighted. In fact I later discovered he was there, but I didn't see him*. This reports a change in the state of the speaker's knowledge as a sequence of events.

The verbs in the hypothetical protasis examined in (13)–(17) differ from the initial verbs in the independent hypotheticals *Would that S* and *May S* of (3)–(12) in two respects: although clause initial, they are not main verbs; and it is not impossible that they can be negated. The double negation in (19)c and similar examples seem to be unacceptable to all speakers.

(19) a. Had Harold not come to the party, I'd have been upset.

b. ?\*Hadn't Harold come to the party, I'd have been upset.

c. \*Hadn't Harold not come to the party, I'd have been surprised, because he knew Sally was there waiting to embarrass him.

(19)c is difficult to process and violates the Gricean maxim of manner; it seems improved (though hardly elegant) when paraphrased as (19)c'.

(19)c' If it were not the case that Harold had not come to the party, I'd have been surprised, because he knew Sally was there waiting to embarrass him.

The appalling opaqueness of (19)c suggests that negation of the initial hypothetical modal is pragmatically if not syntactically blocked, and the (b) sentence (which many people reject as ungrammatical) arises from (a) through negative-raising – which explains why there is no apparent difference in meaning between (a) and (b). Adding to this the fact that many

speakers can accept only (19)a suggests a good case for claiming that, like *Would that S* and *May S*, the hypothetical modals in (13)–(19) cannot normally be negated.

The protasis and the apodosis of conditionals, with and without *if*, constitute distinct clauses that may express different PIs. In all of (13)–(17) the protasis invokes a situation in a hypothetical world (perhaps with an exact counterpart in the actual world); given the situation described for the hypothetical world, the consequence follows as expressed in the apodosis. Are there truth values attached either to the protasis or to the apodosis in (13)–(17)? Take as an example (14), *Were Harold to come to the party, I'd be delighted*. There is no potential truth attached to the clause *Were Harold to come to the party* – as there is not to *Is Harold coming to the party?* The protases in (13)–(17) are hypotheticals, **H**[ $\Phi$ ]. In every case the protasis has the downdrift prosody found in declaratives – the least marked intonation for clause-types.<sup>7</sup> Because the apodoses contain hypothetical verb forms, they have the semantics **H**[ $\Phi$ ]. But they also have truth values in some hypothetical world (in which Harold comes to the party, etc.); in consequence the structure of (13)–(17) is in fact **T**[**H**[ $\Phi$ ]]. Now consider (20) in which the apodosis is imperative, and (21) in which it is interrogative.

(20) Should Tom call, tell him I'll get back to him tomorrow.

(21) Should Tom call, will you ask him to call back after 7 o'clock?

The protases invoke a hypothetical world that provides conditions under which the direction in the apodosis of (20) and the request in (21) should take effect. I propose the following (partial) analyses for such conditionals. The reason for the different bracketing is explained below.

(22) a. **T**[**H**[Would Harold come to the party, I'd be delighted]]

b. **I**[**H**[Should Tom call], tell him I'll get back to him tomorrow]

c. **Q**[**H**[Should Tom call], you will ask him to call back after 7 o'clock]

**T**[**H**[Would Harold come to the party, I'd be delighted]] in (22)a indicates that both **T** and **H** scope over both clauses.<sup>8</sup> In (22)b **I**[**H**[Should Tom call], tell him I'll get back to him tomorrow] indicates that **I** scopes over both clauses, but **H** only over the protasis. There is no doubt that the apodosis constitutes the main clause and expresses the principal illocutionary force. One might compare these with sentences containing tag questions; for example, *Jack*

7. The reason that downdrift is the least marked intonation is that when speaking pitch naturally tends to fall as we use up breath; it can only be made to rise with the expenditure of extra energy (and breath).

8. Although the hypothetical protasis on its own has no truth value, the combination of protasis with the apodosis does have a truth value. The bracketing in (22a) is a simplification of **T**[**H**[Would Harold come to the party], **H**[I'd be delighted]].

*didn't take out the garbage, did he?* in which the question expresses the principal illocutionary force of (an utterance of) this two clause sentence.

All of the conditionals (13)–(22) have paraphrases with *if* marking, e.g. *If Tom should call, tell him I'll get back to him tomorrow*. But not all conditionals have a protasis which is hypothetical. Contrast (23)–(24).

(23) T[H[If there were no tea, we'd have to drink water]]

(24) T[If there is no tea, we'll have to drink water]

(24) is ambiguous between an instance of the irrealis generalization in (23) and a realis reading. (24) can be felicitously uttered by speaker Y following on speaker X's announcement 'There's no tea!'; the same cannot be said of (23). The protasis in (23) identifies a hypothetical situation; it could be rendered *Were there no tea, we'd ...*; whereas the protasis in the realis reading of (24) identifies a factual situation that could not be rendered *\*Were/\*Was/\*Is/\*Be there no tea, we'll ...*. The protasis in realis (24) is understood as habitual-like in that it is a state that extends unbounded into the future. Given the situation *p* [the truth of the fact that there is no tea] identified in the protasis, the consequence follows as expressed in the apodosis. This is not 'given' in the sense of old information, as suggested by Haiman 1978. Speaker presents an assumption in the protasis which may be new information, e.g. *If you want them, there are biscuits on the sideboard; If I may say so, you look a little peaky; If I've hurt your feelings, I apologize* (on the range of conditionals see Dancygier 1998, Bennett 2003). In (23) Speaker (most likely spontaneously) hypothecates *q* given the possibility that *p*; in (24) Speaker predicts that *q* given the facts in *p*. We must conclude that although form is a guide to the realis or irrealis reading of a conditional, it is context that is the decider.

Consider the following:

(25) X: Suppose there's no tea.

Y: If there were no tea, we'd have to drink water.

The supposition in (25)X is (notionally) hypothetical and the complement could be expressed as the explicit hypothetical in *Suppose there were no tea*. The verb *suppose* functions as a lexical marker that makes predictable the hypothetical in its complement. Similarly with (26)a versus the hypothetical complement in (26)b.

(26) a. I wish I was rich.

b. I wish I were rich.

There is no satisfactory explanation (other than history) for the backshifting in (26)a. Perhaps, it is a mark of counterfactuality – one cannot wish for what already exists; but this

explanation fails: contrast *\*I wish I am rich* with *I imagine that I am rich*. Wishing for the future yields the infinitive complement, *I wish to be rich* (cf. *I hope to be rich*); once again, the infinitive is used because it is –R. No wonder that there seems to be no difference in meaning between (26)a and (26)b.

In (27) the *if* clause identifies a hypothetical world in which Speaker takes out a loan; but the main point of the utterance is the italicized question in the apodosis, cf. the discussion of (22).

- (27) a. If I were to take out a loan, *how much interest will I have to pay?*  
 b. *How much interest will I have to pay* if I take out a loan?

(28) presents information which could be expressed, less colloquially, as in (29) where the hypothetical identifies a hypothetical world in which Speaker takes on another mortgage and the apodosis describes the probable consequence in that hypothetical world.

- (28) a. Take on another mortgage and  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} I'm/I'll be \\ I'd be \end{array} \right\}$  stuffed.  
 b. Take on another mortgage and  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} you're/you'll be \\ you'd be \end{array} \right\}$  stuffed.  
 c. ?\*Take on another mortgage and  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} he's/he'll be \\ he'd be \end{array} \right\}$  stuffed.

- (29) a. If I were to take on another mortgage, I'm/I'll be/I'd be stuffed.<sup>9</sup>  
 b. If you were to take on another mortgage, you're/you'll be/you'd be stuffed.  
 c. If he were to take on another mortgage, he's/he'll be/he'd be stuffed.

It is noticeable that in (28) ‘and’ has the implicature “and then” or “and in consequence” (see Allan 2000). (28) demonstrates that the protasis is only possible with an omitted first or second person subject for *take* when the pro-drop is recoverable from context – which, in the case of (28), is the situation of utterance. In informal speech the co-text can allow for sentences like (28)c, cf. (30).

- (30) a. What with his gambling debts and having lost his job, Jack's already stretched to the limit. *Take on another mortgage* and he'd be stuffed.  
 b. He's a vile little boy who's out of control. *Kick that dog again* and he gets his arse whipped.

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9. In the apodosis, *I'm* is (on analogy with an ‘historic present’) the ‘future present’, whereas *I'll be* is a predictive future (cf. *I leave tomorrow* and *I'll leave tomorrow*). Being future, they are both –R, as is *I'd be*. One can quibble about the differences in meaning here: it is, for the picky, something like “I’m already stuffed, even thinking about taking on another mortgage” vs a prediction that “I’ll be stuffed if ...” vs for the *I'd be* apodosis “in some hypothetical world in which I take on another mortgage I am stuffed”. This explanation is meant to be illustrative only, since a full account would take several pages. Furthermore, I think most people would take these different forms of the apodosis to mean the same thing.

It is clear that *Take on another mortgage* is not imperative in either (28)a or (28)c, though it could be in (28)b, cf. *Don't you take on another mortgage, or you'll be stuffed*. Is the clause a non-hypothetical declarative? Clearly not, as is obvious from (30) where there is no third person singular agreement on the main verb. The aphetic clause with the verb in base form is hypothetical. The subject of the second conjunct (the apodosis) readily identifies the proper subject of the first conjunct. Contrasted with the progressive (*Am taking on another mortgage so I'll be stuffed*) the aorist does not refer to a particular event of taking on another mortgage; it has a generic application, and the apodosis refers to the kind of consequence that will follow from any such event. However, such conditional sentences do have truth values (for the difference in bracketing see footnote 8).

- (31) a. **T**[**H**[Take on another mortgage and I'd be stuffed.]]  
 b. **T**[**H**[Kick that dog again] and that boy gets his arse whipped.]

Conditional hypotheticals modify the PI of the clause-type identified in the apodosis, whether it be **T**, **Q**, **I**, or **X**. Thus the illocutionary contribution of conditional hypotheticals is:

<form>  ${}_{PI}\Psi[\mathbf{H}[\Phi] \Psi]$  where  ${}_{PI}\Psi \in \{\mathbf{T}, \mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{I}, \mathbf{X}\}$  ( $\mathbf{H}[\Phi]$  falls within the scope of the PI of the major clause-type identified in the apodosis  $\Psi$ ).  $\Phi$  is one of (a–c) in which Y is variable and may be null.

- (a) BACKSHIFTED MODAL<sup>10</sup>/be/have<sup>11</sup> SUBJECT<sup>10</sup> Y MAIN VERB<sup>11</sup> Y,  
 (b) If SUBJECT (BACKSHIFTED MODAL/be/have) Y MAIN VERB Y,  
 (c) V Y and

<description> Speaker offers a hypothesis in  $\Phi$  as the basis for uttering the consequence in the apodosis  $\Psi$ .

<precondition> Speaker has reason to suppose that  $\Phi$  gives appropriate grounds for the consequent  $\Psi$ .

<illocutionary intention> Speaker reflexively intends the hypothesis in  $\Phi$  to be accepted by Hearer as adequate grounds for uttering the consequent  $\Psi$  (whether it be **T**, **Q**, **I**, or **X**).

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10. As one reviewer pointed out, this should almost certainly be more restricted: it is doubtful that *might* can be included.

11. I am grateful to a reviewer for reminding me that with backshifted-*be* the main verb is a *to*-infinitive, compare *Were I rich* with *Were I to be rich*.

## The complements of mandative predicates

The bare infinitive form of the verbs (italicized) in (32) have been called ‘subjunctive’. They are certainly –R.

- (32) a. We demand that she *be* informed immediately.  
 b. It is necessary that she *be* informed immediately.  
 c. I suggest that he *visit* her as soon as possible.

The main clause predicates in (32) are examples of **mandative** predicates. Others are *advise, agree, allow, ask, command, decide, decree, desire, determine, enjoin, insist, instruct, intend, order, pledge, request, require, resolve, rule, stipulate, urge, vote; be anxious, compulsory, crucial, eager, essential, fitting, imperative, important, keen, preferable, proper, willing* (see Övergaard 1995; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 996–99). Reminiscent of imperatives, the mandative complement is semantically future with respect to the mandative predicate. Negation of the –R complements appears before the bare infinitive: *We demand that she **not be** informed; It is necessary that she **not be** informed; I suggest that he **not visit** her yet*. In this last example, the indicative with *do* support is more colloquial: *I suggest that he **doesn't visit** her yet*. To cut a long story short, formal marking of irrealis is optional in the scope of the governing mandative. There are complements with –R: those with deontic modals are –R and also *to* infinitives. I conclude that although all mandative complements are –R, they are not all marked with the **H** operator.

## Hypotheticals in the scope of Q

Some English interrogatives contain hypotheticals; they ask questions about hypothetical worlds. Interrogative hypotheticals are restricted to requests marked by one or other of only the four backshifted modals shown in (33).

- (33) a. Would you mail this for me? ↔  
 Q[H[N[you would mail this for me]]]  
 b. Could you do me a favour? ↔  
 Q[H[N[you could do me a favour]]]  
 b. Might he be there by now? ↔  
 Q[H[N[he might be there by now]]]  
 d. Should I write to him? ↔  
 Q[H[N[I should write to him]]]

These are all notably tentative by comparison with non-backshifted counterparts (*Will you mail this for me? Can you do me a favour?* etc.), which accounts for their use in polite contexts. All can be freely negated, cf. *Wouldn't you not like to give him a big hug?*<sup>12</sup>

## In conclusion

None of the PIs **T**, **Q**, or **I** falls within the scope of one of the others; they also contrast with independent hypotheticals, that is, main verb root modals *Would that S* and *May S* with the PI **H** in which Speaker vehemently wishes that  $\Phi$  may or may have come about in some hypothetical world. In these rare independent hypothetical constructions, neither *Would* nor *May* can be negated (except metatextually) and **H** is in contrast with **T**, **Q**, and **I**. However, on all other occasions, **H** falls within the scope of **T**, **Q**, or **I**. When **H** falls into the scope of **T** and **Q**, it converts them from referring to actual worlds to referring to hypothetical worlds; for example when setting up a hypothetical conditional as the basis for some consequent, or asking Hearer about a hypothetical world in which  $\Phi$ .

All hypotheticals are –R; but not all –R categories are hypotheticals. Clauses headed by infinitives might be counted a distinct clause-type; but (a) infinitive clauses are always subordinate; (b) they have no consistent illocutionary force; and (c) they do not modify the PI on their governing clause in the same way that **H** and the exclamative operator **!** do. The complement clauses of mandative and optative predicates are also –R and occasionally deontic (deontics look like hypotheticals and perhaps should be counted hypotheticals). Some optative complements definitely are hypothetical; yet the –R environment of mandative and optative predicates is a lexically conditioned property. We could insist that all backshifted modals, and backshifted forms of *be* and *have* are thereby formally marked as hypothetical, but the picture is messy.

For reasons I hesitate to speculate upon, the formal marking of subjunctives and hypotheticals is avoided in many structures, not only in Indo-European languages but other language families too. Often the infinitive can replace the subjunctive because both are –R. In the complements of mandative predicates and sometimes optative predicates not only the –R infinitives and deontics may appear, but even declaratives. This may reflect human preference for the real over the unreal. When a subjunctive is replaced by an infinitive it may reflect a simplification by generalizing one –R form unmarked for tense, person, and number on condition that such secondary grammatical categories can be understood from the context. It is comparable with using a pro-form. In Homeric Greek and Old Irish, coordinated clauses are regularly found in which the first is subjunctive the second indicative (as the default, least

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12. Some people find this unacceptable.

marked, mood). Also in Homeric Greek the infinitive of command typically appears in sentence conjunctions after fully specified imperative forms (Kiparsky 1968: 53). All these grammatical peculiarities manifest the use of a relatively unmarked form in place of a more marked form when the properties that would be marked can be retrieved from co-text. One consequence for English of the avoidance of hypothetical forms is that, when one does encounter them, they seem archaic.

## Appendix: Abbreviations and symbols

PI	primary illocution	F	semantic future tense
Φ, Ψ, etc	propositions	N	semantic present tense
-R	irrealis	P	semantic past tense
+R	realis	N[P]	semantic perfect
T	declarative PI	PP	past participle
Q	interrogative PI	SJV	subjunctive
I	imperative PI	FEM	feminine
H	hypothetical PI	S	singular
X	expressive PI	PL	plural
!	exclamative PI	2, 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> persons

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