

ANA-MARIA TOADER

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**Hypothetical Constructions
in Contemporary English**



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INTRODUCTION

The book entitled “*Hypothetical Constructions in Contemporary English*” focuses on the complex problem of the Indicative Mood *versus* the Subjunctive Mood, which basically means the distinction between [+ real], i.e. actual, factual, existing in fact activities or states and [- real], i.e. not real, non-factual, hypothetical : possible, probable, necessary, desirable, etc. activities or states.

As its title suggests, the book is centred upon some theoretical aspects regarding the different forms of the Synthetic Subjunctive and the Analytical Subjunctive, the conditional sentences in contemporary English, also with specific reference to the different modal verbs used in hypothetical structures.

The book is structured into three main chapters. Chapter 1 presents the Indicative Mood and the Subjunctive Mood, with focus on the tenses of the indicative. Chapter 2 thoroughly analyses the conditional sentences in English with their specific forms, uses, but also restrictions, while Chapter 3 takes into consideration the modal auxiliary verbs used in different hypothetical constructions.

CHAPTER 1. THE CATEGORY OF MOOD IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

Mood means the manner or mode of the action expressed by the verb and it is a grammatical category specific to the verb. It is the grammatical category by means of which modality is expressed, i.e. the attitude of the speaker towards the action denoted by the verb. According to this category, the speaker can present the action as being:

1. [+ real], i.e. actual, factual, existing in fact;
2. [- real], i.e. not real, non- factual, hypothetical: possible, probable, necessary, desirable, etc.

The question of the number of moods in contemporary English is not settled since most moods can be studied from the point of view of their meaning or from the point of view of the forms themselves.

Most traditional grammars distinguish four finite moods: the Indicative, the Subjunctive, the Conditional, the Imperative. On the other hand, modern grammars limit the number of moods to only two basic ones: the two English moods unanimously accepted by grammarians are the Indicative and the Subjunctive.

According to some linguists, the Conditional should be analysed as a type or subtype of the subjunctive on account of its form and meaning. From the point of view of its form, the Conditional is identical with some forms of the analytical subjunctive- in that it uses the auxiliaries *should* and *would*; in

point of meaning, just like the Subjunctive, the Conditional expresses hypothetical values.

The Imperative is not only a verbal form, but also a form of the sentence- a sentence type- whose function is to express orders, commands, requests. Thus there are:

a) Simple forms: V

Open your books. *Give* me a pen, please.

b) Compound forms: do _____ and do not/ don't _____:

Do sit down, please. *Do be* silent.

Don't be late for school. *Don't sit* on my hat.

As for the two moods- the Indicative and the Subjunctive- they are seen as the two basic propositional modalities of English. The characteristic meaning of the Subjunctive is best revealed by means of a comparison between the Indicative and the Subjunctive.

The indicative mood is the mood of assertion, it presents the action as real- or in close relation to reality- or as factual- i.e. as existing in fact. The tenses of the Indicative Mood cover all the divisions of time: past, present or future.

The Subjunctive Mood is *non- assertive*, it presents *non- factual, hypothetical* statements. By using the Subjunctive the speaker considers the action not as real- as existing in reality-, but as hypothetical- as existing in his/ her mind as a possibility, necessity, supposition, doubt, wish, purpose, etc..

Unlike the Indicative clauses, the Subjunctive clauses lack deictic temporal orientation, i.e. they are not actualized in time.

1.1 The Indicative Mood: the forms and uses (for real actions)

Basically speaking, the Indicative Mood is used for ordinary statements and questions:

I have written two letters today.

Are you reading a novel?

She *does not go* to school.

Don't you know my friend?

I *do know* him.

It presents the action or the state expressed by the verb as being real, even fulfilled. The Indicative mood has the next tenses, in chronological order:

- on the past axis: Past , Past Perfect and Future in the Past
- on the present axis: Present, Present Perfect and Future
- on the future axis: Future and Future Perfect

The present tense

There are two present tenses in English:

The simple present: *I work*

The present continuous: *I am working*

The simple present tense

Form

In the affirmative the simple tense has the same form as the infinitive but adds an *s* or *es* for the third person singular.

Uses

The simple present used to express habitual action

1) The main use of the simple present tense is to express habitual actions:

He smokes.

Dog barks.

Cats drink milk.

This tense does not tell us whether or not the action is being performed at the moment of speaking and if we want to make this clear we must add a verb in the present continuous tense:

He's working. He always works at night.

My dog barks a lot, but he isn't barking at the moment.

2) The simple present tense is often used with adverbs or adverb phrases such as: always, never, occasionally, often, sometimes, usually, every week, on Mondays, twice a year etc.:

How often do you wash your hair?

I go to church on Sundays.

It rains in winter.

or with the time clauses expressing routine or habitual actions. *Whenever* and *when* (= *whenever*) are particularly useful:

Whenever it rains the roof leaks.

When you open the door a light goes on.

Other uses of the simple present tense

1) It is used, chiefly with the verb *say*, when we are asking about or quoting from books, notices or very recently received letters: