



THE MAIN CASES OF THE USE OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD IN ENGLISH

Jumayeva Shahlo Shokirovna

Teacher of the “Languages” Department, Bukhara Branch of Tashkent Institute of
Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, Uzbekistan, Bukhara

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Abstract:

The article is about the main cases of the use of Subjunctive Mood in English. As we know Subjunctive Mood is used to express wish, oath and imprecations. In simple sentences the synthetic forms of the Subjunctive Mood are more frequent than the analytical forms. The Subjunctive Mood is used in conditional sentences to express an unreal condition (in the subordinate clause) and an unreal consequence (in the principal clause).

Key Words: simple sentences, complex sentences, subjunctive mood, indicative mood, grammatical categories, linguists, sequence of tenses, predicative, subjective, permissive, conditional, pronouns, definition, description, implementation, speech.

Preface:

There are many controversial and not thoroughly investigated points in the English grammar. Nevertheless, in my opinion one of the most difficult and not clear both from the point of view of its definition and description and from the point of view of its practical implementation in speech is the subject of the Subjunctive Mood. Even the name of this grammatical category seems ambiguous in term of its being approached and characterized by different outstanding linguists in our country and abroad. No wonder this problem couldn't but arise my curiosity and language interest. I have made up my mind to consider the material compiled on this problem in different sources to clear up the point for myself and to have a better idea about the usage of the Subjunctive Mood in speech.

The Main Cases of the use of the Subjunctive Mood in English:

1. Simple Sentences:

In simple sentences the synthetic forms of the Subjunctive Mood are more frequent than the analytical forms. In simple sentences the Subjunctive Mood is used:

- To express wish:

e.g. Success attend you!

- To express wish the analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary may is also used.

e.g. May you live long and die happy!

- To express an unreal wish:

e.g. If only he were free!

- In oaths and imprecations:

e.g. Manners be hanged!

- In some expressions:

e.g. Be it so!

God forbid!

The Subjunctive Mood in simple sentences is characteristic of literary style, except in oaths and imprecations, which belong to low colloquial style.

2. Complex Sentences:

The Subjunctive Mood is used in conditional sentences to express an unreal condition (in the subordinate clause) and an unreal consequence (in the principal clause).

In sentences of unreal condition referring to the present or future the past Subjunctive of the verb to be is used in the subordinate clause; with other verbs the same meaning is expressed by the Past Infinitive of the Indicative Mood. In the principal clause we find the analytical subjunctive consisting of the mood auxiliary should or would and the Indefinite Infinitive. Should is used with the first person singular and plural, would is used with the second and third person singular and plural.

e.g. The world would be healthier if every chemist's shop in England were demolished.

An unreal condition referring to the future can also be expressed by the Past Subjunctive of the verb to be + to – Infinitive of the notional verb or the analytical Subjunctive with the mood auxiliary should for all the persons. Such sentences are often translated by means of «Если бы случилось так...», «Случилось так...»

e.g. Well, Major, if you should send me to a difficult spot – with this man alone, I'd feel secure.

If in the subordinate clause the mood auxiliary should is used, we often find the Indicative Mood in the principal clause.

e.g. If he should come, ask him to wait.

In sentences of unreal condition referring to the Past Perfect of the Indicative Mood is used in the subordinate clause; in the principal clause we find the analytical subjunctive consisting of the mood auxiliary should or would and the Perfect Infinitive.

e.g. If I had consulted my own interests, I should never have come here.

There are two mixed types of sentences of unreal condition. In the first of these the condition refers to the past and the consequence refers to the present or future.

e.g. If you had taken your medicine yesterday, you would be well now.

In the second type the condition refers to no particular time and the consequence to the past.

e.g. If he were not so absent-minded, he would not have mistaken you for your sister.

In sentences of unreal condition the modal verbs might and could are often used; they fully retain their modal meaning and therefore they do not form the analytical subjunctive.

Here we have the group «modal verb + Infinitive» which forms a compound verbal modal predicate, whereas the analytical subjunctive forms a simple predicate.

e.g. I could have done very well if I had been without the Murdstones.

Would, when used in the subordinate clause of a sentence of unreal condition, is also a modal verb forming with the infinitive a compound verbal modal predicate.

e.g. If you would come and see us..., mother would be as proud of your company as I should be.

The conjunctions introducing adverbial clauses of condition are: if, in case, provided, suppose, unless, and some others.

e.g. Suppose he wrote to you, would you answer?

Adverbial clauses of condition containing the verbs had, were, could and should are often introduced without any conjunctions. In these cases we find inversion.

e.g. Should he come this way, I will speak to him.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in sentences expressing what may be understood as an unreal consequence, the condition of which is not expressed as such.

e.g. There was no piano... because it would have taken up much room.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in adverbial clauses of purpose.

When a clause of purpose is introduced by the conjunctions that, so that, in order that, we find the analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary may(might) if the principal clause refers to the present or future; if the principal clause refers to the past, only the form might is used.

As has already been stated, the mood auxiliary may(might) retains in this case a shade of modality.

e.g. He got up, cautiously, so that he might not wake the sleeping boy.

If a clause of purpose is introduced by lest the mood auxiliary should (for all persons) is generally used. Lest has a negative meaning (чтобыне).

e.g. She opened the window lest it should be stuffy in the room.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in adverbial clauses of concession.

Adverbial clauses of concession are introduced by the conjunctions and connectives though, although, however, no matter, whatever, whoever, etc. The analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary may (might) is generally used.

e.g. Though he may (might) be tired he will go to the concert.

If the action of the subordinate clause is prior to that of the principal clause the Perfect Infinitive is generally used.

e.g. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in adverbial clauses of time and place after the conjunctions whenever and wherever; in these cases the clauses have an additional concessive meaning.

e.g. Whenever you may (might) come, you are welcome.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in adverbial clauses of comparison (or manner) introduced by the conjunctions as if and as though (the latter is more literary).

If the action of subordinate clause is simultaneous with that of the principal clause the Past Subjunctive of the verb to be is used; with other verbs the same meaning is expressed by the Past Indefinite of the Indicative Mood.

e.g. She speaks about him as if she knew him well.

If the action of the subordinate clause is prior to that of the principal clause the Past Perfect of the Indicative Mood is used.

e.g. She speaks about him as if she had known him for years.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in predicative clauses:

a) introduced by the conjunctions as if, as though, when we find the link verbs to be, to feel, to look, to seem, etc. in the principal clause.

If the action of subordinate clause is simultaneous with that of the principal clause the Past Subjunctive of the verb to be is used; with other verbs the same meaning is expressed by the Past Indefinite of the Indicative Mood.

If the action of the subordinate clause is prior to that of the principal clause the Past Perfect of the Indicative Mood is used.

e.g. I fell as if we were back seven years, Jon.

b) when the subject of the principal clause is expressed by an abstract noun such as wish, suggestion, aim, idea, etc. In this case the analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary should (for all persons) is used.

e.g. One of the conditions was that I should go abroad.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in subject clause after a principal clause of the type It is necessary, It is important, etc.

It is necessary

It is important

It is right

It is requested

It is recommended that smb. should do smth.

It is obligatory

It is better (best)

It is desirable

It is of vital importance

The analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary should is used for all persons.

e.g. It was necessary that the child's history should be known to none.

The Subjunctive Mood is used in object clauses:

a) When the predicate of the principal clause is expressed by the verb to wish. If the action expressed in the object clause is simultaneous with that of the principal clause the Past Subjunctive of the verb to be is used; with other verbs the same meaning is expressed by the Past Indefinite of the Indicative Mood.

e.g. I wish I were a girl again.

If the action expressed in the object clause is prior to that of the principal clause the Past Perfect of the Indicative Mood is used.

e.g. Auntie, I wish I had not done it.

The analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary would (for all persons) is also used in object clauses the verb to wish. This form is used only in sentences referring to the present or future; it is possible only if the subject of the principle clause is not the same as the subject of the object clause. It is chiefly used in sentences expressing request or annoyance.

e.g. I wish you would stay with me for a while.

b) The Subjunctive Mood is used in object clauses introduced by the conjunction lest if in the principal clause the predicate is expressed by a verb denoting fear.

e.g. She fears lest she should be blamed.

After verbs denoting fear object clauses are often introduced by the conjunction that, in which case the Indicative Mood is used often with the modal verb may (might).

e.g. She fears that she will (would) be blamed.

c) The Subjunctive Mood is used in object clauses when we find verbs and Word-groups denoting order, suggestion, advice, desire, etc. in the principal clause. The analytical subjunctive with the mood auxiliary should (for all persons) is used.

It should be understood that I do not claim that the results obtained by us are embracing all the English and American literature, but I can express an idea that they may be characteristic of it. The authors can very well do with the Indicative Mood and sometimes Imperative in their creative activities not using supposition, wishes, sorrow and other emotional shades of meaning so much, as I had first expected. May be it is due to the fact that the stories I considered for investigation are based on modern life reality. It is not necessary to say that our contemporary life is deprived of that romantic touch of sentimentality which can be expressed with the help of the Subjunctive Mood. But I do hope that the forms of the Subjunctive Mood which I discovered in the works of modern English and American writers will be of interest to our students. As far as my interest of this research paper is concerned I am guided by the words of Pascal who said: «People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they themselves have discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others».

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