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The Subjunctive as an ESL Teaching Tool With Emphasis on the Modal Verbs

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THE SUBJUNCTIVE AS AN ESL TEACHING TOOL
WITH EMPHASIS ON THE MODAL VERBS

Burr Thomas

January 1986

THE SUBJUNCTIVE AS AN ESL TEACHING TOOL
WITH EMPHASIS ON THE MODAL VERBS

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

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January 1986
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This project by Burr Thomas is accepted in its present form.

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to most analyses, the subjunctive mode plays a major, if sometimes subtle, role in English grammar. Related western European languages have similar subjunctives, and examining the function of the Spanish and the morphology of the German subjunctives helps to illuminate the functions and forms of English.

There are two subjunctive forms in English, S1 and S2. Both have coalesced with indicative forms, losing much of their saliency, the S1 to a much greater degree. For this reason, the S1 is much less common, surviving primarily in frozen formulations, Imperative Expressions, and as an adjunct to the imperative mode.

The S2 has a wider productive range of Expressions of Potential, which includes Verbs of Mental State and Softened Assertion. The full paradigm of the conditional covers both tense and mode while Reported Speech operates through mode rather than tense.

The modal verbs are the major locus of the subjunctive mode. Their grammar is severely reduced and a class of phrasal substitutes has also evolved. *Would* has developed into a subjunctive marker which is often inserted replacing declension of the main verb. This may be referred to in transformational terms as *WOULD-support*.

Appendix A presents a synopsis of the findings as a Teachers' Manual with student materials.

Appendix B shows how the findings would be accounted for in the phrase structure rules of transformational grammar.

ERIC Descriptors:

Applied Linguistics
Language Instruction > English Instruction
English (Second Language)
Instructional Materials
Teaching Techniques
American English
Language Usage > Standard Spoken Usage
Grammar
Verbs

C O N T E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

"Subjunctive verb forms have almost disappeared in Modern English. About the only survivor is 'were' instead of 'was' in such expressions as: If he were here, he would be happy." (1)

Statements such as this are typical of even the informed speaker's impression of the role of the subjunctive in English today. Consulting a comprehensive grammar such as Marcella Frank's *Modern English* adds only a handful of other infrequent uses which only the more advanced ESL student would have any reason to be exposed to.

The reason the subjunctive is unrecognized in English is that its forms have lost their saliency, and almost completely fallen together with those of the present and past indicative. Much modern analysis, therefore, attempts to assign the occasional apparent irregularities of usage by assigning them to the tense of the indicative form and creating case by case "rules".

This is unfortunate for two reasons. First, it obscures an active and productive set of relationships which are indeed at work in English, and second, it makes the ESL teacher and students work a lot harder than necessary to understand some of the "unexplainable" features of English verbs. Many ESL students will, in fact, be used to the idea of the subjunctive from their native languages, and this makes it a productive tool for explaining, in particular, the shades of meaning within the modal verbs and the conditional.

1. Jackson, Eugene, *German Made Simple*, New York 1965

In order to cast more light on this obscure mode of English, it will be helpful to examine the subjunctives of other related languages. We can see the traces of how English came to its present position by looking at modern German whose system is closely related to that of English, but where the form has remained just enough more distinct to be readily understood.

We can also look at Spanish to see an example of a well-developed system in a familiar language where the subjunctive form has remained distinct, so that the language can rely on it to do a lot of work. And from that we can see the kinds of functions the subjunctive is still performing in English.

I hope to demonstrate during the course of this paper that the subjunctive in English is alive and well. Rather than being some mysterious form of archaic grammar, it is used constantly by speakers of all social levels. The intuitive understanding of subjunctive is so natural and so deep that I have observed it in consistent and accurate use in the speech of a four-year-old, having been acquired well before the past tense forms of many strong verbs.

First, however, it may be in order to review briefly the concepts of verbal mode.

What is Mode (Mood)?

Verbs vary in several important ways to show something about the nature of the action being expressed. They change their tense to indicate the time of the action. They change in person and number to express agreement with the subject of the verb. They can change their voice from active to passive, and can change their aspect to show whether the action is on-going or completed. As each of these is free to vary on its own, all of the above are independent features of the conjugation of the verb.

Another independent feature of the verb is known as mode (or mood) which shows the conclusiveness of the action expressed, and which admits three possibilities: indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

The Indicative is the normal work-a-day mode for most verbs. As its name implies, it serves to tell or indicate what is going on ("Here comes John"), describe ("You look wonderful today"), or state facts ("The house is a mess"). It is conclusive, but can be softened as well by expressions such as "perhaps" and "maybe".

The Imperative is the mode which expresses wishes and desires in the form of requests and commands. When you say "Finish your lima beans," it does not indicate that the lima beans are finished, but only that you wish them to be finished. The one may or may not follow from the other.

The Subjunctive is the mood which indicates the uncertainty of things. Most English speakers will recognize it in the expression "if I were

younger..." where it shows something not to be true (2). But the subjunctive, as we shall see, is also the mode which covers the large gray areas of doubt, uncertainty, speculation and disclaimer.

When one says "I *would* visit them if I *had* time" instead of the more definite "I *will* visit them if I *have* time," he is using the subjunctive to show that his intentions are not absolute. In fact, like Spanish or Japanese, English uses the subjunctive a lot to soften statements. In polite contexts it is the difference between "I *want* it" and "I *would like* it (please.)"

2. Note that this is quite different from the indicative statement "I am not younger..." which is certainly true.

THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE

While the forms of the Spanish subjunctive are of little relevance to the historical development of the English subjunctive, the system of usage and meaning is of considerable interest. Of all the romance descendants of Latin, Spanish is perhaps the most conservative, and is certainly the one which has taken the most pains to codify and regularize its grammar. The effect is that grammatical niceties and distinctions are very clear and accessible. This makes it a pleasant language for the learner, and also removes just those kinds of ambiguities of form with which we will struggle in analyzing German and English. As a consequence, the Spanish subjunctive is clearly understood by speakers of the language, and can be fully exploited for carrying the differences of meaning or intent which the subjunctive mode implies. In turn, the rules of usage for the subjunctive have been thoroughly developed and codified, and will allow us to understand more about its meaning and effect.

But first a brief review of the forms of the Spanish subjunctive should be useful for the following discussion as well as for the many people who have already some familiarity with the language. The infinitives of Spanish verbs all end (very regularly) in *-ar*, *-er*, or *-ir*. As shown in Table 1, the present indicative endings of *-ar* verbs such as *tomar* are based on *-a-* plus person/number endings. Similarly, the *-er* and *-ir* verb endings are based on *-e-*, like *comer*. The exception is the first singular *-o* for all three classes of verb. With equal straightforwardness, the present subjunctive endings simply reverse

The Spanish Subjunctive

Table 1

Infinitive	Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
tomar to take	yo tomo tú tomas Vd. toma nos. tomamos vos. tomáis Vds. toman	tome tomes tome tomemos toméis tomen	toma / no tomes tome tomemos tomad tomen
comer to eat	yo como tú comes Vd. come nos. comemos vos. coméis Vds. comen	coma comas coma comamos comáis coman	come / no comas coma comamos comed coman
tener to have	yo tengo tú tienes Vd. tiene nos. tenemos vos. tenéis Vds. tienen	tenga tengas tenga tengamos tengáis tengan	ten / no tengas tenga tengamos tened tengan
saber to know	yo sé tú sabes Vd. sabe nos. sabemos vos. sabéis Vds. saben	sepa sepas sepa sépamos sepáis sepan	sabe / no sepa sepa sépamos sabad sepan
ir to go	yo voy tú vas Vd. va nos. vamos vos. vais Vds. van	vaya vayas vaya váyamos vayáis vayan	va / no vayas vaya váyamos id vayan
haber to have (aux)	yo he tú has Vd. ha nos. hemos vos. hais Vds. han	haya hayas haya háyamos hayáis hayan	ha / no hayas haya háyamos habed hayan
ser to be	yo soy tú eres Vd. es nos. somos vos. sois Vds. son	sea seas sea seamos seis sean	se / no seas sea seamos sed sean

the core vowel to *-e-* for *-ar* verbs and *-a-* for *-er* and *-ir* verbs, plus the same additional person/number endings.

The small number of Spanish verbs which are irregular are, predictably, those which are the most frequent. From them it can be noted that the subjunctive stem is in fact derived from the first person singular stem, as in *tener* >> *tengo* >> *tenga*. For those yet fewer verbs without an *-o* ending in the first singular (*saber*, *ir*), a truly irregular stem is used.

The subjunctive is used in all tenses, except that the present serves for the future, replacing an archaic form. The other simple subjunctive form in common usage is the imperfect. Briefly, it is formed from the past stem, and can be readily visualized as derived from the third person preterit plural: *tom-ar* >> *tom-a-ron* >> *toma-ra/toma-se* and *com-er* >> *com-ie-ron* >> *comie-ra/comie-se*. You will notice that there are two alternative forms, *-ra* and *-se*, of which the later has only a slightly more limited usage.

Haber and *estar* (*to be*) are the primary auxiliary verbs. Their subjunctives are used to make the compound subjunctive tenses.

The significance of the Spanish subjunctive for us, however, is in its usage.

"In Spanish, actual facts are expressed with verbs in the indicative, whereas potential realities are expressed with verbs in the subjunctive.

A potential reality is a happening or situation whose existence is reported as subject to some attitude on the part of the speaker. The speaker may (1) regard the existence of the fact as impossible or open to question (*it is unlikely that the match occur*), or (2) take some attitude towards the existence of the fact (*Why green? Because I demanded that it be green. Besides, it's appropriate that it be green.*)

Alternatively...a reality is potential if it is...dependent upon another verb or phrase (sometimes only implied) that expresses, among other things, emotion, will, doubt, or a judgement, hypothesis, supposition, or special proviso.

Certain contexts or fixed conditions require the subjunctive in Spanish,...but in other cases the subjunctive simply follows from the attitude of the speaker." (3)

Notice in the examples above that the English verbs *occur* and *be* also reflect the same use of the subjunctive, and that while we will discuss rules, the subjunctive is more really governed by intent, that the same grammatical construction can change its meaning depending on the choice of mode.

The subjunctive is most often found in relative or subordinate clauses governed by a main verb or conjunction which implies uncertainty. This includes:

Verbs of will, desire, preference and advice

<i>Querer</i>	to want, wish	<i>Aconsejar</i>	to advise
<i>Preferir</i>	to prefer	<i>Decir</i>	to tell, i.e. command

Digale que venga. Tell him to come. (*lit* ...that he should come.)

Verbs of emotion: joy, sorrow, fear, surprise

<i>Temer</i>	to fear	<i>Alegrarse</i>	to be happy
<i>Sentirse</i>	to regret	<i>Esperar</i>	to hope

Temo que llegue tarde. I am afraid he may be late.

Verbs of uncertainty, doubt, denial

<i>Dudar</i>	to doubt	<i>Negar</i>	to deny
--------------	----------	--------------	---------

Dudo que sea exacto. I doubt that it is accurate.

Negative and interrogative verbs of saying, believing, thinking when uncertainty is implied

<i>No dije que fuera el mejor.</i>	I didn't say that he was the best.
<i>No creo que pueda hacerlo.</i>	I don't believe he can do it.

Subordinating conjunctions of purpose and unaccomplished result

<i>para que</i>	in order that	<i>a fin que</i>	so that (to the end that)
<i>de modo que</i>	so that	<i>a que</i>	for

El politico habla de manera que no le entiendan.

The politician is speaking (in such a way) so as not to be understood.

Subordinating conjunctions of concession, exception or proviso

<i>aunque</i>	although	<i>a menos que</i>	unless
<i>sin que</i>	without	<i>no sea que</i>	in spite of

Sali sin que lo notara. (lit.) I left without that he noticed.

Subordinating conjunctions of future time or uncertainty

<i>cuando</i>	when	<i>antes de que</i>	before which
<i>hasta que</i>	until	<i>en cuanto que</i>	as soon as

Esperaré hasta que llegue. I'll wait until he comes.

Impersonal expressions unless they imply a certainty

<i>Es posible</i>	It is possible	<i>Es probable</i>	It is probable
<i>Es menester</i>	It is necessary	<i>Es increíble</i>	It is unbelievable

Es probable que llueva hoy. It is probable that it will rain today.

The second major area for the use of the subjunctive is in the conditional, especially in conditions contrary to fact as well as other possibilities unrealized. Simple (factual) conditions are, naturally, in the indicative. Curiously enough, however, for counterfactual conditions the imperfect subjunctive is used to express present and future time, with past time expressed by the pluperfect.

"English conditional sentences which take the subjunctive in Spanish are easily recognized because the word *should* or *would* appears or is understood in every one.

Si el estuviera aqui (contrary to fact) *yo lo sabría.* If he were here, I should know it.

Si lloviese (implying uncertainty) *no iríamos.* If it should rain, we should not go." (4)

Today we observe different usages for should and would, but the point remains that Spanish and English both use the subjunctive in a similar way in the conditional.

A third construction which requires subjunctive in Spanish is for verbs with an indefinite antecedent. In the sentence "*Busco a alguien que pueda ayudarme* - I am looking for someone who could help me," it is not considered a known fact that such a person exists, so the verb of which he is the subject (*puede*-he can) is put into the subjunctive. In this case the subjunctive indicates uncertainty about the reality of someone or something whose existence may be only in the speaker's imagination.

The fourth major area of use for the Spanish subjunctive is softened assertion. Unlike the previous cases, this is directly dependent on the speaker's intention and has no grammatical structures which govern it. However, only the *-ra* form of the imperfect subjunctive is used for softened assertion. Thus it is found in polite statements and indirect commands.

Quisiera ver a su padre. I would like to see your father.

No debiera salir sin sombrero. You shouldn't go out without a hat.

This usage makes the imperfect subjunctive one of the frequently occurring tenses in Spanish.

One other point of possible interest is to notice that the imperative mode occupies an intermediate ground between indicative and subjunctive, sharing most of the latter's forms. In fact, there exists, logically, a true imperative only for the second person forms. Historically Spanish

developed the third person (*Vd.*, *Vds.*) to use for the formal *You*, reserving second person for the familiar. Thus, for first and third persons, the imperative simply uses the subjunctive forms: *coma Vd.*--(you formal) eat, with the implication of "I wish..." or "I command..." The second person plural, *vosotros*, is somewhat archaic but has its own imperative form derived from the infinitive. The singular, *tú*, has an imperative form for affirmative commands which resembles the indicative minus the *-s* ending, but shifts to subjunctive for negative commands.

THE GERMAN SUBJUNCTIVE

Because Modern English shares many of its origins with Modern German through their common West Germanic ancestors, much of the grammatical structure of the two languages as well as the vocabulary has developed along parallel lines. But because English has been subjected to a long history of outside influences from neighboring languages and dialects through settlement, trade, and invasion, it has changed much more radically: its vocabulary has increased tremendously while at the same time its morphology has been much simplified. In particular the inflectional endings which marked the cases of nouns and the person and number of verbs have all been dropped except for the three -s's of possessive, plural, and third person singular endings.

German, meanwhile, has been much more conservative and retained most of its inflectional endings for verbs, though somewhat fewer for nouns. Similarly, while English strong or irregular verbs (*sing, sang, sung*) now appear rather unsystematic, in German they can still be grouped into about seven major classes which conjugate alike (*singen, sang, gesungen*). It is for reasons such as these that the observation of German can help us see through to many underlying aspects of English which have become obscured by centuries of heavy varnish.

In this particular case, it is the subjunctive which remains distinct in German and can help us understand the remnants of the subjunctive which we find in English. As in German, there are in English two forms of the subjunctive, one derived from the infinitive and the other from the past tense. In German they are known as subjunctive I & II.

THE GERMAN SUBJUNCTIVE
Table 2

Infinitive	Pres. Ind.	Subj. I	Past Ind.	Subj. II
lernen to learn	ich lerne	lerne	lernte	lernte
	du lern <i>ST</i>	lern <i>EST</i>	lernstest	lernstest
	er lern <i>T</i>	lern <i>E</i>	lernte	lernte
	wir lernen	lernen	lernten	lernten
	ihr lernet	lernet	lerntet	lerntet
	sie lernen	lernen	lernten	lernten
gehen to go	ich gehe	gehe	ging	<i>ginge</i>
	du gehst	<i>gehest</i>	gingst	<i>gingest</i>
	er geht	<i>gehe</i>	ging	<i>ginge</i>
	sie gehen	gehen	gingen	gingen
	haben	haben	haben	haben
	haben to have	ich habe	habe	hatte
du hast	<i>habest</i>	hattest	<i>hättest</i>	
er hat	<i>habe</i>	hatte	<i>hätte</i>	
sie haben	haben	hatten	<i>hätten</i>	
sehen to see	ich sehe	sehe	sah	<i>sähe</i>
	du siest	<i>sehest</i>	sahst	<i>sähest</i>
	er sieht	<i>sehe</i>	sah	<i>sähe</i>
	sie sehen	sehen	sahen	<i>sähen</i>
	fahren	fahren	fahren	fahren
	fahren to drive	ich fahre	fahre	fuhr
du fährst	<i>fahrest</i>	fuhrst	<i>führest</i>	
er fährt	<i>fahre</i>	fuhr	<i>führe</i>	
sie fahren	fahren	fuhren	<i>führen</i>	
sein to be	ich bin	<i>sei</i>	war	<i>wäre</i>
	du bist	<i>seiest</i>	warst	<i>wärest</i>
	er ist	<i>sei</i>	war	<i>wäre</i>
	sie sind	<i>seien</i>	waren	<i>wären</i>
	werden	werden	werden	werden
	werden to become	ich werde	werde	wurde
du wirst	<i>werdest</i>	wurdest	<i>würdest</i>	
er wirt	<i>werde</i>	wurde	<i>würde</i>	
sie werden	werden	wurden	<i>würden</i>	
können can to be able	ich kann	<i>könne</i>	konnte	<i>könnte</i>
	du kannst	<i>könnest</i>	konntest	<i>könntest</i>
	er kann	<i>könne</i>	konnte	<i>könnte</i>
	sie können	können	konnten	<i>könnten</i>

In English they are illustrated by the forms (I) "If this *be* madness..." or "I suggest that he *go*." and (II) "If I *had* time..." or "If I *were* interested..." Unlike German, the forms in English are only completely distinct for the verb *to be*.

The forms of the German subjunctive are diagrammed in the accompanying Table 2. For those who have not studied German, the table is perhaps overly complete and need only be briefly discussed here. *Lernen* represents the typical regular or weak verb. The endings are italicized. As you can see, the present indicative and the subjunctive I are both formed from the stem of the infinitive. Only in the second and third person singular, *du* and *er* (5), is there a difference in the ending to distinguish the forms. You will also see that the simple past is formed by adding a *-t-*, the etymological equivalent of the English *-ed*, and that the same personal endings are then added to the past stem to form the subjunctive II. In the regular verbs, there is, like English, not enough distinction left for either subjunctive to stand out by form alone.

However, many of the most common German verbs, including the auxiliaries and modal auxiliaries, are irregular and show the subjunctive forms distinctly. Please notice in the table that the plural endings *wir-we* and *sie-they* are identical and that *ihr-you* (plural familiar) is not commonly used so that for simplicity in the table only the *sie* form is shown. To give an idea of the saliency of the subjunctive forms, those that are distinct from their indicative counterparts are italicized.

5. The pronoun *du* and the second person singular verb are used for the familiar, while *Sie*, grammatically the third person plural, is used (capitalized) for the second person formal. *Er* is the third person singular masculine, while *sie* and *es* are the feminine and neuter respectively. The third person plural for all genders is *sie*.

Gehen is typical of a common strong or irregular verb. The difference between the present and subjunctive I is minor, and really only distinctive in the third person singular where it takes the form of omitting the final *-t*: the effective equivalent of leaving off the *-s* in the English third singular: "But if he *take* the challenge..." In German, as in English, this form is little used today due to its low level of distinctiveness. In English such forms sound archaic; in German their use is restricted to certain situations:

Die Verfassung sagt, alle Gewalt gehe vom Volke aus.

Man nehme eine Tasse Mehl und zwei Eßlöffel Zucker...

However, the subjunctive II, formed from the past, is not only more distinctive in form, it also stands out because it is a past-resembling form which shows up in a present tense context. Since the strong (irregular) verbs do not take the regular past endings, the subjunctive form is distinctive for all the singular persons. For these reasons it does the major amount of work for the subjunctive mode.

The remaining examples in Table 1 illustrate the other common situations in which the subjunctive forms remain distinct. *Sehen*, *fahren*, and *werden* exemplify those verbs which have a stem-vowel change in the present indicative which is not shared by the subjunctive I form. *Haben* and *sein* are examples of verbs with other irregularities in the indicative not shared by the subjunctive I.

Most of the verbs illustrate the vowel change which frequently takes place between the past and the subjunctive II--umlaut, or the process in which the vowels *a*, *o* and *u* are fronted and rounded (marked by "), a common and productive vowel shift in German which, in this case, serves to highlight the distinctiveness of the subjunctive II forms.

While the list in Table 2 is grammatically complete, it does not reflect current German usage. Both subjunctives I & II are present-tense forms, and their practical use is limited to auxiliary and modal verbs, at least in spoken German. Rather than using the subjunctive of a common verb, which would sound archaic, a compound tense is generally used with the auxiliary in the subjunctive. *Haben*, *werden*, and *sein* are the most common auxiliaries along with the modals shown below, several of which are recognizable by their etymological relationship to the English modal verbs.

MODAL AUXILIARIES

dürfen	may, be permitted to
können	can, be able to
mögen	like (to), care to
müssen	must, have to
wollen	will, want to
sollen	should, ought to

USAGE

Like English but unlike Spanish, German does not have certain verbs or constructions which automatically require the subjunctive. Instead, its use is determined by the attitude or opinion which the speaker wishes to convey.

"The subjunctive expresses varying degrees of uncertainty, doubt, and nonreality. It may indicate that the speaker is expressing a hypothesis about a given situation, speculating on what might happen or might have happened, or that the realization of such a situation would seem desirable to the speaker, or that the speaker has no first-hand knowledge of the situation but is merely reporting what he has heard about it. It is exclusively an indication of the relationship or attitude of the speaker towards the situation described.

Hans schrieb, daß er morgen kommt. (I consider it certain.)
Hans schrieb, daß er morgen komme (or käme). (I do not know whether it is true.)" (6)

6. In English the two sentences would translate as, 1) Hans wrote

As in Spanish, the same sentence with a change of mode expresses different situations. Of course, the subjunctive is required logically in sentences which relate something unreal or unfounded. It is also commonly used in certain types of imperatives and in reported speech.

SUBJUNCTIVE I

Subjunctive I is actually the much less used of the two forms. In the main clause, it is used to express a wish or desire which could be fulfilled, or a request or command, particularly in the third person singular.

<i>Gott sei Dank!</i>	God be praised.
<i>Daß er noch lange leben möge!</i>	May he live long still.
<i>Seien wir froh, daß...</i>	Let us be glad that...

In dependent clauses, Subjunctive I is used:

for restrictive or concessive clauses.

Sein Zeugnis sei wie es wolle, er wird die Stellung nicht bekommen.
(lit.) Be his evaluation as it may, he will not get the position.

to express the speaker's reservations about someone else's statement.

Paul ist nicht in die Schule gekommen, weil er Kopfschmerzen habe.
Paul didn't come to school because he has a headache.

after *damit* to show intention or purpose, not necessarily fulfilled.

Der Vater gab seinem Sohn Geld, damit er sich einen Anzug kaufe.
The father gave his son money so that he might buy a suit.

in indirect quotations to show that the speaker is not responsible for the information reported. This case will be discussed in more detail later.

Er erklärte mir, warum er nicht kommen könne.
He explained to me why he couldn't come.

that he *is coming* tomorrow, and 2) Hans wrote that he *would come/was coming* tomorrow.

Lederer, et al, *Reference Grammar of the German Language*, New York, 1969.

SUBJUNCTIVE II

The Subjunctive II expresses a conjecture about what might occur or be possible or what might have been, as well as possibilities which one imagines but which have not (yet) taken place.

Grammatically, it bears repeating that although derived from a past form, the subjunctive II is a present tense, and that to express the past a compound tense must be used with the auxiliary taking the subjunctive II conjugation. It is also worth noting again that in colloquial German the strong trend is away from using the simple subjunctive II forms of most verbs, relying instead on compounds formed with the auxiliaries or modal auxiliaries showing the subjunctive II conjugation. In this trend, German usage is coming to resemble English usage closely.

Also like English, German verbs have no conditional tense. If both condition and conclusion are possible, the indicative is used. If, however, the condition is contrary to fact, the subjunctive II is used. When the subjunctive form would be identical to the indicative, a compound-tense form with *würde-would* (< *werden*) is required to show the counterfactual condition. In speech, *würde* forms are often used even where not strictly required, although in formal speech or writing a compound tense using the subjunctive of another auxiliary or modal auxiliary is preferred.

Note also that in German, as in English, the *if* of a contrary-to-fact subjunctive clause can be omitted, in which case the verb moves to the front of the clause, eg.

Had we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, were no crime.

Wäre er heute gekommen, hätte er das Fest nicht versäumt.

The Subjunctive II, then, is used:

for conditions contrary to fact, either expressed or implied.

Wenn ich Geld hätte, ginge ich heute abend ins Theater.
or *würde ich heute abend ins Theater gehen.*
If I had the money I would go to the theater tonight.

Er könnte mir sicher helfen, wenn er wollte.
He could certainly help me if he wanted to.

Mit etwas mehr Mühe könntest du die Arbeit leisten.
With a little more effort you could do the work.

Ich hätte den Brief geschrieben, aber ich hatte keine Zeit.
I would have written the letter, but I didn't have time.

for contrary to fact wishes, often with *doch* or *nur* as an intensifier.

Wenn mein Vater nur käme! If only my father would come.

Hätte ich diesen Fehler nur nicht gemacht!
(lit.) Had I only not made this mistake!

with the conjunction *als* to introduce unreal comparisons.

Er gibt Geld aus, als wäre er ein Millionär.
He's spending money as if he were a millionaire.

in concessive clauses, often with *auch* (even), to express the unlikelihood of an event's occurring.

Auch wenn du mir 100 Mark gäbest, würde ich diese Arbeit nicht tun.
Even if you gave me 100 marks I wouldn't do this work.

to express an imagined possibility.

Ich habe jetzt so viel Zeit, daß ich auf Reisen gehen könnte.
I now have so much time that I could go on trips.

with the conjunction *ohne daß* to indicate that an expected situation did not occur.

Er benützte mein Auto, ohne daß er mich darum gebeten hätte.
(lit.) He used my car without that he asked me about it.

in relative clauses to indicate a possibility or wish.

Ich habe einen Freund, mit dem du nach München fahren könntest.
I have a friend with whom you could travel to Munich.

in questions expressing considerable doubt.

Gäben Sie mir wirklich das Geld? Would you really give me the money?
Sollte er das vergessen haben? Could he have forgotten that?

for very polite questions and requests, often with *würden*.

Könnten Sie mir bitte Auskunft geben? Could you please give me some information?
Würden Sie mir bitte das Buch bringen? Would you please bring me the book?
Ich möchte gerne wissen,... I would like to know...

with *dürfen* to express a cautiously phrased supposition.

Er dürfte jetzt schon zu Haus sein. He should be home by now.
Der Junge dürfte etwa 18 Jahre alt sein. He must be about 18.

with *beinahe* or *fast* to show that an event almost took place, but didn't.

Sie wäre fast vom Pferd gefallen. She almost fell from the horse.

REPORTED SPEECH

Speakers of German ordinarily use the subjunctive in indirect quotations to show that they are merely repeating received information without assuming its accuracy. However, the rules of that usage are shifting dramatically from the older, more formal style to modern colloquial use. As mentioned above, subjunctive I is generally losing ground to subjunctive II. This is especially true of reported speech where the formal rule strongly prefers subjunctive I except where that form is non-distinct, while modern usage tends to rely entirely on subjunctive II except when it is not. In English this same shift has long since occurred.

The following cases can be observed:

As a dependent clause introduced by *daß*.

Karl schrieb mir, daß er morgen komme/käme.
 Carl wrote me that he would come tomorrow.

As an independent clause with *daß* omitted.

Er sagte mir, sie habe/hätte es schon gesehen.
 He told me she had already seen it.

In an interrogative clause with an interrogative conjunction.

Er erklärte mir, warum er nicht kommen könne/könnte.
He explained to me why he couldn't come.

Ich fragte ihn, ob er dabei gewesen sei/wäre.
I asked him whether he had been there.

In an imperative paraphrased with the modals *müssen*, *sollen* or *mögen*.

Meine Eltern sagten mir, (daß) ich ein neues Auto kaufen solle/sollte.
My parents told me (that) I should buy a new car.

Obviously, if the speaker wished to indicate his support of a statement or its factual nature, he would use the indicative.

Er sagte, daß er gestern seine Fahrkarte schon gekauft hat.
He said that he already bought his ticket yesterday.

Galileo wußte, daß die Erde sich um die Sonne dreht.
Galileo knew that the earth turns around the sun.

THE ENGLISH SUBJUNCTIVE

In spite of the conventional assertion that the subjunctive is extremely rare in Modern English, I hope to demonstrate that its function is indeed so common as to be everywhere. This will be complicated by the fact that the subjunctive forms in English are indistinct, having merged with indicative forms, and that the usages have traditionally either been assigned to other features of the language, or left unexplained. However, I believe that virtually every rule governing the choice of the subjunctive mode which we have looked at in Spanish and German has its English counterpart. My conclusion will be that it is primarily in the system of modal verbs that the English subjunctive expresses itself.

The proof will be developed in several stages. The forms will be examined so that the potential subjunctive uses can be identified. Clearly identifiable examples, although sometimes archaic, will be cited when their distinctive forms can demonstrate that English has had similar basic rules for subjunctive usage as those for Spanish and German, while modern examples will show that the functional rules are still in effect, even though grammatically unique forms no longer occur. Finally, I will try to develop a grammatical framework which will summarize the observations.

FORMS

Like German, English has the remnants of the two Subjunctives, S1 & S2, formed from the infinitive and past, respectively. Likewise, English has come to prefer the S2 to the substantial exclusion of the S1.

The Subjunctive 1 forms are identical with the infinitive or simple form of the verb. That is, they remain uninflected. Since almost all present tense English verbs have lost their inflectional markers, the S1 is only seen in the third person singular, where it omits the -s, and in the verb *to be*. It is presumably this low level of distinctiveness which has led to its decline. Many of the more familiar examples are formulaic expressions with *be* and a King James flavor.

Thy kingdom *come*, Thy will *be* done...

Be he alive or *be* he dead..., *Be* that as it may...

However, expressions of "urgency" or "request" (Imperative Expressions) also call for Subjunctive 1.

I do request that the photos *be* returned when you are finished.

Fisher also suggests the bank *create* a strong project management team.

The committee required that revenues *cover* the service's costs.

Some currently available examples with S1 would be considered archaic or over-formal by many speakers, and the more common paraphrase with an S2 modal auxiliary would be preferred.

One *need* only look at a few examples...

One *would* only *need* to look at a few examples...

That preference reflects the major form now used for expressing the Modern English subjunctive.

The Subjunctive 2 forms are derived from the past-tense form of the verb. Since only *to be* has any past forms inflected for person or number only *were* in place of *was* is distinct in form.

If he *were* seriously interested, we would have heard from him.

For all other verbs, strong and weak, the form of the S2 is identical to the indicative past tense.

If I *wanted* your advice, I *would* ask for it.

If he *showed up* now, it *would* be disastrous.

But if the Subjunctive 2 form is identical to the indicative past tense, how is it distinguished? Very simply, by being a past-tense form in a present- (or future) tense context. In the example "If he *went* tomorrow, we *would* go with him," it is the contradiction between *went* (past-tense) and *tomorrow* (future-context) which signals the subjunctive mode. The indicative form of that same conditional sentence is, then, "If he *goes* tomorrow, we *will* go with him." (7)

The major repository for the subjunctive in English has become the modal verbs, or modal auxiliaries. Since they typically have a meaning which indicates intention, suggestion, or possibility, it seems reasonable that the subjunctive mode should have fallen in with them. In fact the name "Modal Verbs" recognizes the fact that their use overlaps substantially with that expressed by verbal mode.

7. An unusual and intriguing example of the past tense of the future auxiliary: "[Certain tokens] became obsolete in 1933 when [various companies] merged to form Capitol Transit Co. Capitol Transit *would continue* to use [token] 500 C along with its own, but [the others] were melted down for scrap during WWII.

THE MODAL AUXILIARIES

<u>Present Indicative</u>	<u>Past or Subjunctive</u>	<u>Phrasal Substitute</u>
will	would	(to) be going to
can	could	(to) be able to
shall	should	(to) ought (to)
may	might	
must (<mote)	had to	(to) have to
ought (<owe)	(should + perf)	(to had better) (8)

Historically, *must* and *ought* are past tenses of *+mote* and *owe*. Although this is not true today, it does explain why these two behave somewhat differently and have no past tense themselves, but rely instead on their phrasal substitutes for inflectable forms. The relationship between *ought* and *had better* is not definitive but seems convenient. It would then appear that *should* (plus perfect tense) is used as a periphrastic past tense of *ought* and *had better* as a periphrastic subjunctive.

THE CONDITIONAL

Because the conditional frequently deals with conditions contrary to fact, it is a clear-cut place to begin examination of one of the most common subjunctive uses. In fact, all of our Subjunctive 2 examples so far have been conditionals. While conventional grammars consider a number of isolated cases of the conditional (typically about four), the complete paradigm consists of six types: three tenses x two modes, as seen in Table 3.

8. *To had better* is apparently a frozen subjunctive form equivalent to *(you) would better have*, but with a very irregular paradigm and is not discussed further.

THE CONDITIONAL

Table 3

Indicative: Factual or Probable

Future: Prediction

If gold drops any further, we will take a substantial loss.

Present: Neutral time

On Sundays, if it's nice, we go to the park.

Past: Past habit

If Joe washed, I dried the dishes.

Past unknown

If he was here, he probably ate dinner already.

Subjunctive: Imaginative or Improbable

Future: Wish (Unrequited)

If only she would say yes, we could get married right away.

Present: Hypothetical

If he wanted to ask you, he could phone.

Counterfactual

If it weren't raining, we would leave.

Past: Contrary to fact (condition unfulfilled)

If he hadn't been on time, I would have left without him.

Other equivalents of *if*:

as if	suppose that	whether
even if	provided that	as though
if only	in the event that	

The present and future tenses refer to present and future time in an obvious way; the past tenses have developed a somewhat more idiomatic usage. The indicative mode is used for simple, known, or affirmative cases, the subjunctive to show improbability or contrariness-to-fact. Please note that the sentences in Table 3 are of the simple parallel type in which both clauses agree in tense and mode. More generally, the basic tense (point of reference) of a conditional sentence refers to the condition (*if*) clause, because there is no grammatical restriction which limits the tense or mode of the result clause. Rather, in both speech and writing, time and mode are mixed between the two clauses as logical conditions permit.

The Future Indicative is used for predictions of simple cause and effect. Because future time in English is so frequently expressed by a present-tense verb or paraphrase, *will* does not usually occur in the *if*-clause. In that case, the two most useful guides to recognizing future condition are *will* in the result clause, and your own perception of the futurity of the sentence.

If any are broken or missing, you will be charged for them.

If this keeps up, I'm going to go nuts.

If that will prove acceptable to them, they will be able to proceed with the approval process.

The general rule that *will* or *would* never occurs in the *if*-clause is only a guideline; contrary examples exist, and appear to emphasize the future aspect.

The Present Indicative also relates a simple cause and effect, relationship, or conclusion, the latter usually with *must*, or some equivalent. Because the present tense in English is often used generally, i.e. temporally neutral or unmarked for time, the actual time reference is often future or even past, relying on other cues to specify temporal details.

If it's going well, it's safest to leave it alone.

If Mikey likes it, it must be good.

If he gets to Hartford before the storm, he's home free.

But if the German troops don't get out of Russia before the winter sets in, they will be faced with...

The Past Indicative is used for unknown events in the past, known events taking *because* or some equivalent. Generally speaking, events are unknown because the speaker was not present or has not received a full report. They have an air of conjecture and usually occur with *probably*, etc. Because the verb tense of the *if*-clause (past indicative) appears identical to that of the present subjunctive for most verbs, it is the result clause which shows the indicative mode distinctly.

If he was here, he probably ate dinner already.

If LA just had a major earthquake, many people must have been hurt.

If they didn't get lost, their car must have broken down.

The Future Subjunctive is used for a future event which can be imagined, but is considered unlikely to occur. Very often it expresses improbable or impossible wishes. The subjunctive shows the speaker's disbelief in the

likelihood of their coming true. In this case, I believe *would* in the *if*-clause to be the distinctive feature (*cf.* future indicative), while *just* or *only* are often included as intensifiers.

If he would just stop moaning so much, he'd be able to figure it out.

If only tomorrow morning wouldn't come so early...

If they'd invite us, we'd go in a second.

If a student should miss class, a note will be (*ind.*) sent home.

The Present Subjunctive is used as generally as the present indicative. Its meaning can extend to the hypothetical--expressing doubt, uncertainty, or conjecture, or to the counterfactual--expressing the untrue nature of the idea in the *if*-clause. The past-tense resembling form can be the simple verb, an auxiliary, or frequently a modal auxiliary, as well as a number of paraphrases. The reference to present or future time can be implicit or explicit.

If his theory could be proven, it would cause a major reevaluation.

If we got there Tuesday, we could stay a week.

If he weren't such a jerk, maybe the girls would like him.

I'd leave soon if I weren't having such a good time.

The Past Subjunctive sees heavy use to indicate a condition contrary to fact in the past. Because the events of the past are known, the subjunctive is used to show that the condition expressed in the *if*-clause did not come to fruition, so neither did the result. Because the simple past form is used for present subjunctive, the past requires the use of a perfect tense, with either the auxiliary or a modal auxiliary showing the inflection.

But if she had said one word about it, I would have told her ...

If you hadn't come along then, I don't know what I would have done.

If he couldn't have done even that much, I would have just given up.

Beyond this, the subjunctive can, in fact, overlie any of the compound tenses which can be created in the indicative paradigms, but these do not need to be developed here.

There are also statements in which the condition in the *if* clause is paraphrased or implicit rather than expressed directly. However, they otherwise resemble the other conditionals completely.

Conditions permitting, we will go skiing next weekend.

Oh, could you? That would be really helpful.

Knock the chip off my shoulder, and I'll knock the block off yours.

Two other points of grammatical distinction between indicative and subjunctive in the conditional should be mentioned. First, because the events in an indicative statement can be reasonably expected to occur, *when* often substitutes readily for *if* in the indicative (with minor shift in meaning), but not in the subjunctive.

If it rains, we'll go inside. (When it rains...)

If I need help, I call my brother. (When I need help...)

If they came now, it would be a problem. (*When they came...)

Second, as in German, there is an optional phrase structure for the subjunctive in which the *if* is deleted and the verb moved to the front of that clause. (9)

Had we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, were no crime.
 This form has a somewhat archaic feel, and is related to another
 construction which paraphrases the initial *would* without being directly
 reconstructable to a clause with initial *if*.

Were this not reason enough... (If this were not...)

Would she but give me some sign, some token...

(If she would but give...)

Had .we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, .were .no
 crime.

(If we had ...

...would be...)

9. If the S1 is taken as a general imperative (see p. 39), a similar
 construction also applies for the vocative S1 or direct imperative.

THE MODAL VERBS

Before proceeding to the further uses of the subjunctive, let us look more closely at the modal verbs themselves--how they operate, and what they are used to mean. They form a class of verbs distinct from active verbs and verbs of being or mental state, having had a radically different historical development. One obvious difference today is that they have no infinitive form or usage (**to can, *to will*); another, that they have no future usage (**I will can, *I will must*). In both these cases, they rely on their phrasal substitutes when such a form is needed. In addition, modals have no -s inflection in the third person present. Where they do occur is in the auxiliary position before an active verb or verb-of-being to modify it with whatever meaning they carry. In the same position, they are frequently the carriers of the Subjunctive 2 inflectional information.

Will/would is the most basic of the modals, that is, it has the most neutral meaning. In the indicative it is used to mark the future tense of a verb, without adding any additional denotative meaning (10). Similarly, in the subjunctive *would* adds no denotative meaning of its own, but simply serves as a carrier for the meaning of the subjunctive mode.

In this way it performs a function comparable to DO-support in the indicative: it carries the inflection when the main verb will not, not only for negative and interrogative, but also for affirmative subjunctives. It

10. This is distinct from *to will*, the verb of volition. This discussion also overlooks the classical differentiation between *shall* and *will* for simple futurity and volition.

may be useful to refer to this as WOULD-support for the subjunctive. I contend that the differences in meaning which come with the addition of *would* in these cases come purely from the change of mode. Very frequently, the phrasal subjunctive with *would* + simple verb is preferred to the S2 form of the verb itself, making *would* probably the most commonly encountered form of the S2.

Shall/should is historically related to *will/would*; but because of shifting usage has developed idiomatic meanings. In our grandparents' time, *shall* was used (in certain environments) to show will or volition in contrast to the simple futurity of *will*. It still has this as an emphatic meaning. Because such emphatic assertion is contrary to the uncertainty implicit in the subjunctive, the S2 form *should* shifted to acquire the sense of obligation or recommendation (11). It is used in subjunctive environments.

Ought, however, is used to express this same obligation or recommendation in indicative environments. The meaning is very similar, and the distinction primarily grammatical, but *ought*, being indicative, is probably a bit stronger. As mentioned above, *ought* came to its current position by an indirect course, being originally the past/S2 form of *owe*. It still retains much of the subjunctive feeling of suggestion or softened assertion, and can be used as a periphrastic subjunctive in an indicative context. It is also unusual for a modal in that it requires *to* before a

11. Perhaps because *I should* shows the result of an imperative, i.e. the obligation that someone else's volition or strong opinion creates in me. (*I have been shall-ed*).

following affirmative (but not negative) verb, revealing again a bit of its history as a linking active verb. It can also exist as an infinitive, and is probably included with the modals as much for its meaning and function as for its grammar.

Must is the other present-day modal which comes from a different verb in the past. Originally it was the past/S2 form of *+mote* which meant "is permitted, may".

The transition from this to the sense 'be obliged, must' is more difficult to explain; it may have arisen from the use in negative contexts, where the two senses ('may not, must not') are nearly coincident. (OED, VI:689, "Mote".)

Eventually, *mote* drifted off in the direction of *might* and coalesced with it, leaving *must* to function as the indicative with the meaning of strong obligation or requirement. The phrasal *to have to* was all that was available to take further inflection, however, and so is used for past and S2 as well as negative. All this makes *must* a difficult modal for foreign students, as most ESL teachers can attest.

Can/could in its indicative meaning expresses the ability to do the action of the following verb. Like an active verb, it has a strong sense in the indicative, but it is an auxiliary and can not stand by itself. The subjunctive *could* is a frequently encountered form because it can be used to express (or enquire about) the possibility of an action or situation in a hypothetical manner.

May/might, on the other hand, already expresses the possibility and also the uncertainty of an event. *May* as an indicative seems to express the

same idea through its meaning as other verbs express through a shift to subjunctive mode. Thus it occurs in many periphrastic subjunctives and formulations such as *maybe*. *Might*, as the subjunctive member of the pair, seems to express even more tenuous possibilities.

The importance of this to teaching English is that we can then establish the following hierarchy of softness of assertion:

He must help us.	(Must you help us?)
He will help us.	Will you help us?
He can help us.	Can you help us?
He would help us.	Would you help us?
He could help us.	Could you help us?
He may help us.	(May you help us?)
He might help us.	Might you help us?

It may be impossible to determine exactly the distance between every pair since they tend not to exist in free variation, but in distinctive environments.

FUNCTIONS

Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
 As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could, an if we would,'
 Or 'If we list (12) to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,'
 Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
 That you know aught of me... (Hamlet I.v.175-9)

One of the major differences between the subjunctive in English and in other languages is that the English forms are not as salient. This leads to the other major difference: the grammatical constraints are not as strong. Unlike Spanish, where certain constructions and expressions require the use of the subjunctive, in the majority of cases in English, it is primarily up to the speaker whether he wishes to express his degree of uncertainty through the subjunctive or in other ways. Grammatically, that means that very few of the rules we are about to discuss are obligatory, and contrary examples can be readily found. Indeed, my British car manual advises me, "we recommend that the engine *is* cool before proceeding." A lot of variation will be observed, particularly from dialect to dialect, some observing many subjunctive uses and others few to none.

If you *should drop* a load a foot instead of six inches,
dropped you could crush...
were to drop
drop

I *could*... and I think I *might should*.

Nonetheless, English does recognize much the same contexts as German and Spanish for choosing the subjunctive, the single largest determiner being the expression of unrealized potential or possibility. Already in our

 12. = Pleased (cf. lust).

discussion of the conditional, we have looked at one major subset of the subjunctive of potential. As we continue, however, we will find that the uses overlap substantially. Let us now consider some others.

IMPERATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Imperative Expressions go by many names. An English teacher will recognize the large group which is classed together under the heading of "Expressions of Urgency or Request". In the classic cases these include a main clause with a noun, verb or adjective of compulsion and a dependent clause beginning with *that...* They can be personal or impersonal expressions which request, command, urge, recommend, or otherwise indicate the speaker's wish that the action in the dependent clause *occur*. The verb of the dependent clause is in the S1 indicating that it is not an accomplished fact, but rather the subject's mental projection of what is possible or desirable.

Verbs

We request that he *leave*.
demand
require
suggest

Adjectives

It is essential that he <i>leave</i> .	She is eager that he <i>leave</i> .
necessary	determined
desirable	desirous
demanding	
required	
requested	
imperative	
acceptable	

Nouns

The suggestion that he *leave* went unheeded.
requirement

...

We ask that the Office *be* notified in any cases requiring...

...unless a doctor has requested that a student *remain* at home.

The committee intends that Amtrak *be allowed* to derive \$30 million...

There is wide grammatical latitude in the construction of the main clause. The verb *occur* which is italicized on the preceding page is an example, dependent upon the preceding noun *wish*. Others include:

It is his goal that the government *accept* responsibility for...

I will help him on the condition that he *do* what I say.

Although most speakers would prefer a subjunctive paraphrase or even indicative verb in this last example, conservative dialects (literary or highly educated) preserve a greater number of S1 uses.

In developing a more general understanding of Imperative Expressions some of the traditionally miscellaneous cases fit within its scope.

Negative Purpose

I didn't tell him the news lest he *spread* it all over town.

where *lest* functions as the negative equivalent of *that*.

Unaccomplished Result

...a factor which nixed plans that veterans *be used* again in service.

Impersonal Expressions

It was inevitable that the subject *come* up.

This last type seems more anomalous, since it expresses a kind of certainty about an event which probably happened. Perhaps in English, as in Spanish, the grammatical type (impersonal expressions) does influence,

by analogy, a certain few cases beyond those where the operating principle is clearly visible.

While the S1 is considered the subjunctive mode in traditional German and English grammar, another analysis may be possible for modern-day English, based on the observation that its form is also that of the imperative. Most of the S1 constructions discussed above can be seen as a kind of reported or indirect imperative. Discussion of the imperative mode has essentially been limited to the case of direct address, with subject deleted, while the classic third person imperatives have been discussed as a case of the S1:

The devil *take* thy soul.

Long *live* the King.

These are primarily encountered in formulaic expressions and have no S2 equivalent. Instead, the more modern form is a paraphrase with *May... or Let...*

Since direct imperatives plausibly exist only in the present, it may be worth noting that the S1, unlike the S2, does not occur in past tense compounds, all observed examples being in the present tense.

While it may not be historically arguable, it seems plausible to suggest that those situations where the S1 survives today are those where it is essentially an extension of the imperative mode.

EXPRESSIONS OF POTENTIAL

The grammatical environments which permit S1 constructions are much more limited than those which permit similar expressions with the S2. Many former S1 functions have now passed to the S2, some of which will be referred to later. This is in part due, no doubt, to the loss of the S1's saliency outside the third person singular, and to the usual requirement of a full dependent clause with subordinator -- *that* or equivalent. The S2, conversely, seems to have few specific requirements for its grammatical context. The most frequently encountered S2 forms encountered are the modals, especially *would*.

I wish it *would* rain. (vs. I know it *will* rain.)

Many items need attention, including ground anchors that *could* corrode.

If you *could* get here on time, we *would* appreciate it.

As mentioned before, the use of *would* is so prominent that it frequently replaces, without additional meaning, the use of S2 with the main verb to form a subjunctive sentence.

If you *stood* up to him...

If you *would stand* up to him...

In some cases, this happens to the degree that the main verb is incapable of carrying the subjunctive meaning, and only the *would* form seems acceptable. Because of its similarity to DO-support to carry inflections in the indicative, this can be referred to as *WOULD-support* when that word is introduced only to carry the sense of the subjunctive. Differing rules for use of *WOULD-support* is one conspicuous differentiating feature of various dialects of English.

Many of the examples discussed under the conditional will also be found to fit within the sense of S2 Expressions of Potential. With the S2, function rather than grammar seems to be the primary determiner which governs choice of the subjunctive. Some of the contexts which call for the S2 of potential are:

Purpose and Unaccomplished Result

The father gave his son money so that he *might buy* a suit.

He waited all evening so that he *could* see her.

...in order that they *might / may* (PS) (13)

Speculation/conjecture/uncertainty

It is possible that they *might/would*...

Could he have forgotten all about it?

He *should* be home by now.

The "C.T." *would* stand for either Central Traction or Consolidated Traction, both of which were taken over by Pittsburgh Railways.

Impersonal Expressions

It's time we *started*.

It's about time they *came*.

The subjunctive here implies that the action has not happened. It could be a modal paraphrase equivalent to *ought to*, or an analogous situation to the S1 of impersonal expressions.

Indefinite Antecedent

I'm looking for someone who *could/might* help me.

(I don't know that such a person exists.)

Imagined Possibility and Concessive Clauses (negative possibility)

I have so much time now, I *could* go on trips.

This *would be* fabulous weather for all kinds of stuff.

...until the "fasten seat belts" sign *might be* turned off
during the flight.

You *wouldn't believe* me even if I *did tell* you the truth.

Even if you *gave* me \$100, I *wouldn't do* it. (14)

SOFTENED ASSERTION

Softened Assertion is another major use of S2 which may be considered within the larger sense of the subjunctive of potential. In this case it is used to show polite register. As in other European languages, the use of the subjunctive (S2) in both statements and requests has the effect of softening the verb and adding a deferential quality. A paraphrase could frequently be "I suggest that..." In this respect it can sometimes function as a polite imperative. Japanese makes extensive use of the equivalent form by adding the particle *-sho/-ro* (maybe) to show deference and respect.

If in the following examples the indicative is substituted, one can see how the mood changes to show deference, politeness or reserve.

Assertion

14. The concessive clause with S1 seems to be an archaic survivor:
Be that as it may (PS)... = No matter how that may be (PS)...
 Another archaic S1 of possibility, from the 1920s:
 If this card *be* addressed to a place outside the commonwealth
 [extra postage] should be applied.

It *would* be better if we *could* take a little extra time.

It will be better if we can take a little extra time.

I believe he *would* help us.

I believe he will help us.

Perhaps it *would* be easier if we *tried* a different approach.

Perhaps it will be easier if we try a different approach.

Request

Would you bring me that book?

Will you bring me that book?

Could we take the rest of the afternoon off?

Can we take the rest of the afternoon off?

Might I ask a small favor?

May (PS) I ask a small favor?

(?)Can I ask a small favor?

That *wouldn't* be a piece of cheese left, *would* it?

That isn't a piece of cheese left, is it?

Preference

I'd rather wait until I've finished what I'm doing first.

?I will rather wait until I've finished what I'm doing first.

I *would* love to go out to dinner Thursday.

?I will love to go out to dinner Thursday.

Offer

Did you want to go?

Do you want to go?

You *didn't* want another cookie, *did* you?

You don't want another cookie, do you?

PERIPHRASTIC SUBJUNCTIVE

The periphrastic subjunctive was mentioned briefly in the discussion of modal verbs. This may be an appropriate place to return to it since it would figure prominently in a complete discussion of polite register and softened assertion. In effect, the periphrastic subjunctive uses a verb with a denotative meaning which includes the features of uncertainty or potential. The clearest example is *may*. The meaning of *may* as an auxiliary is that of possibility, thus its indicative sense is parallel to the meaning which the subjunctive mode adds to other verbs. This means that *may*, *maybe*, etc. can be used as an alternate means to expressing the subjunctive's meaning.

No matter how clever he *may be* he won't get out of this one.

It is my express wish that my body *may be* buried privately
without [public ceremony]. -George Washington

In the first case, the PS replaces an S1 which in this use now sounds archaic (15), while in the second the S1 with simple *be* would be more expected today.

In fact, it is the rich repertoire of paraphrases which makes some areas of the subjunctive so nebulous in English today.

If you could come this way, we'd like to kinda keep this group
together if possible.

15. *Be* it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

VERBS OF MENTAL STATE & EMOTION

The S2 can also occur after verbs of thought or desire to express potential. The usage in English is assigned to the class of verbs of mental state (which are grammatically distinct because they use the simple rather than continuous present), while in Spanish they are classed as verbs of emotion, because it is their meaning which requires the subjunctive, expressing an opinion about a hypothetical event, rather than a completed one.

I believe he *would help* us.

I wish he *would get* here already.

I hope that it *would be* possible...

I doubt that he *would be* willing to.

I wish I *had known* about this matter several weeks ago.

REPORTED SPEECH

The last remaining major use of the subjunctive is that of disclaimer, allegation and reported speech. As we saw quite clearly in German, *modo* gives us the ability to indicate our support or disavowal of information that we are quoting from another source. If we wish to confirm the source's statement, we can choose the indicative. If, on the other hand, we wish to question it, or remain neutral, the subjunctive shows our reserve.

The discussion will be complicated by the fact that traditional grammar treats reported speech quite differently. Because the S2 form is identical to the past-tense form and because the reporting verb is usually past (for obvious reasons) the conventional rule calls for present context to place the reported verb in the past, and for past context to use the past perfect, while in the same breath decriing the fact that observance of this rule is eroding drastically (and, usually, the rest of grammar with it.) I believe that this is because the rule actually observed is to vary the reported verb between indicative and subjunctive in the original tense depending on the speaker's attitude towards the information presented.

Carl wrote me that he *'s coming* tomorrow. (I consider it certain.)

Carl wrote me that he *was coming* tomorrow, or:

Carl wrote me that he *'d come* tomorrow. (I don't know if it's true.)

The proof is further complicated by the broad spectrum of interactions between the tenses of the reporting verb (generally a past tense), the reported verb, and the relationship of the reported action to the present time (i.e. whether an originally future event is now past, etc.)

He told me he *'ll get* it tomorrow. (direct report, indicative)

He told me he *would get* it tomorrow. (neutral or reserved, subjunctive)

He told me he *got* it yesterday. (direct, past indicative)

He told me he *had gotten* it yesterday. (reserved, past subjunctive)

This paradigm is already quite cloudy if we examine such sentences in isolation. Without a discourse context it may prove impossible to establish the tense/mode, for example, of:

He told me he *would get* it yesterday. (16)

TIME & TENSE

Should we wish to make the attempt, it would be necessary to consider more deeply the relationship between time and tense. Basically, the conventions of reported speech would be most effectively discussed within the larger context of tenses of the Bull framework (17). The Bull framework posits that there are only three simple temporal tenses -- past, present, and future -- and that all the compound tenses result from the interaction of these, relative to the point of reference, i.e. the simple tense of the overall statement. Thus the pluperfect is a reference from a past point of view to a yet prior event, and the future perfect a future reference to an event previous to that future reference. For example, in indirect discourse:

	present	past
present	He <i>says</i> he <i>is</i> here.	He <i>says</i> he <i>was</i> here.
past	He <i>said</i> he <i>was</i> here	He <i>said</i> he <i>had been</i> here.

16. As opposed to "He told me he *would have gotten* it yesterday," which is clearly the subjunctive of unrealized intention.

"As with other auxiliaries, the pa.t. (orig. subjunctive) of *shall* is often used to express, not a reference to past time, but a modal qualification of the notion expressed by the present tense. Where in addition the notion of past time is to be expressed, this can often be effected by the use of the perf. instead of the pres. inf. (though sometimes this produces ambiguity); the temporal notion may however only be contextually implied, and in that case the pa.t. has the appearance of having both functions (temporal and modal) at once." (OED, IX:612 *Shall*.)

17. Bull, W E. *Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics*. Ronald Press, New York, 1965, Ch. 14.

However, it is not my purpose to examine here the relationship of time, tense and mode in reported speech in greater detail, especially since the critical feature of the speaker's intent is impossible to determine in such isolated examples. I simply wish to propose that, within this discussion of the subjunctive, where mode is signalled by the shift of apparent verb tense, and when taken together with the insights offered by the Bull framework, a significantly different analysis of reported speech seems plausible.

While the church maintained that the sun *revolved* around the earth, Galileo knew that the earth *turns* around the sun.

This may be further supported if the S1 is analysed as the imperative mode. Since direct imperatives plausably exist only in the present, changing the tense of the main verb would not change that of the dependent (imperative) verb.

It *is* imperative that he *come*.

It *was* imperative that he *come*.

And, in fact, no past tense uses of the S1 have been observed.

DISCLAIMER

A clearer sub-set of reported speech is that of disclaimer, where the speaker's intention is to deny the possibility of the reported verb.

He denies that he *would* even *consider* such a thing.

I didn't say I *would be* there.

Not every example of disclaimer is reported speech:

Grade B is recommended for sidewall application. It *could* be used on a roof where slope is over 4/12.

SUMMARY

Contrary to popular belief, the subjunctive plays a major, if sometimes subtle, role in English grammar. Historically, the development of its forms can be traced through its Germanic ancestry, although those forms have largely coalesced with the indicative in Modern English, losing their saliency and with it the clear perception of their modality on the part of most speakers.

On the other hand, the English subjunctive has continued to function very much like the subjunctive of the rest of its Indo-European relatives, expressing a modal distinction in contrast with the indicative and imperative. Spanish offers a clear example of a fully elaborated subjunctive which English strongly resembles in its functional aspects. The function of the subjunctive is to show the feature of uncertainty or non-reality in the verb and its accompanying statement. This covers such areas as possibility, speculation, doubt, denial and counterfactuality.

The grammar of the English subjunctive is straight-forward, if somewhat complex. There are two versions, Subjunctives 1 & 2, referred to as S1 and S2. The first is the more restricted grammatically and the less salient in form, and is therefore losing ground to the second. For this reason, the S1 is more often encountered in frozen formulations and formalized expressions, while the S2 is much more commonly used.

The S2, correspondingly, has very few grammatical restrictions or requirements and its use is governed primarily by the speaker's intended meaning. It is encountered in full use in virtually all geographic and social dialects, but since it is not an overtly recognized function, the specifics of its form and usage are sometimes highly mutable. In addition, English has a rich repertoire of subjunctive paraphrases which yield yet more cases to consider.

The Subjunctive 1 form is taken from the base (infinitive) form of the verb, as are the imperative and present tense indicative. However, the imperative and subjunctive are uninflected. Since the only remaining indicative inflexions are on the third person singular and in the verb *to be*, these are the only places where the S1 is distinguished from the indicative by its form.

The currently active environment for S1 production consists primarily of a set of somewhat conventionalized expressions which express a kind of reported or indirect imperative. Known variously as "Expressions of Urgency or Request", *inter alia*, they consist of a noun, verb or adjective of compulsion followed by a dependent phrase introduced by *that*, whose verb takes the S1.

An alternative analysis of these "Imperative Expressions" would suggest that rather than a true subjunctive, they today represent the extension of the imperative mode beyond the single traditional case of vocative or direct imperatives. This more general analysis may also account for several of the otherwise anomalous cases of the S1.

The Subjunctive 2 form is taken from the simple past form of the verb, as is the past tense indicative. But once again, the subjunctive is uninflected. Since the only remaining past indicative inflexions are on the first and third persons singular of the verb *to be*, these are the only places where the S2 is distinguished from the past indicative by its form. It is critical to note, however, that both the S1 and S2 are present tense forms, notwithstanding the traditional misnomers of present and past subjunctive respectively.

This is the key to the S2's having retained its saliency: it contrasts the simple past form with the inflected present. Therefore, temporal context plays a critical role in maintaining this contrast and with it the recognition of subjunctive function. It is for this same reason that subjunctive constructions can often appear identical to past indicative, leading many grammatical analysts to misassign subjunctive examples when no clear context exists.

There is no simple past form for the subjunctive. Instead a compound form such as the perfect tense must be used with the auxiliary verb in the present subjunctive. Since mode is independent of tense, the subjunctive can be added to any tense expressed by the verb.

Grammatically, then, the choice of S2 is usually unlimited by structural context, being dependent instead on the situational context and often wholly on the intent of the speaker to show uncertainty or non-reality. The cases which show the contextual requirement more clearly include verbs of mental state and the conditional.

Verbs of mental state and emotion form a distinct class in English by their grammar. Because mental state includes concepts of potential such as expectation, hope, supposition, and imagined possibility, its logic often requires the subjunctive in a dependent verb.

The conditional is commonly seen as a small set of recognizably related cases, but without a unifying perspective. In its full basic paradigm, it consists of six cases: the three simple tenses of the Bull framework by two modes, indicative and subjunctive. The present and future tenses cover their respective conditionals literally, while the past conditionals have acquired a moderately idiomatic sense. The indicative covers real and probable actions, the subjunctive improbable and counterfactual. Any of the compound tenses of the Bull framework can occur in the conditional, with no grammatical restriction on the tense or mode of the result clause relative to the *if* clause. Rather, in both speech and writing, time and mode are mixed between the two clauses as logical conditions permit.

Beyond these two, most S2 uses in dependent clauses can be grouped as "Expressions of Potential". A variety of expressions which show intention, conjecture, uncertainty or unsuffered consequence are followed by a subjunctive verb.

The role of intent, on the other hand, is most clearly seen in reported speech. Here, the verb in the reported clause varies between the indicative and subjunctive to show whether the speaker is reporting it as fact or allegation: confirming the report or remaining neutral, dubious or otherwise reserved.

Once again, the S2's resemblance to the past indicative has led many analysts down a wrong track, not satisfactorily resolving the relationship of time, tense and mode in reported speech. The Bull framework develops a grammatical relationship between simple time and compound tenses. This together with the subjunctive mode apparently account for the observed tense relationships of verbs in reported speech.

A more subtle subjunctive of intent occurs with softened assertion and polite speech. This large category employs a bewildering variety of S2s and subjunctive paraphrases to show deference, respect or reserve. Many are formulaic responses governed by the social context. However, an analysis which integrates the subjunctive and the modal verbs promises to illuminate subtle hierarchical distinctions among closely variant expressions.

The modal verbs are, as their name might imply, a major reservoir of verbal mode in English. In several cases, their prime function seems to be as the carrier of modal distinction, by their denotation as well as by their expressed mode. They form a distinct class by their grammar and historical development and include some transitional verbs with partial paradigms. Their grammar is severely reduced in scope, so that a class of phrasal substitutes has developed to provide their full function.

The development of the form of English subjunctive usage has been strongly towards a compound verb with *would + simple verb* replacing the simple S2 of the verb itself. When this occurs and *would* is inserted solely to bear modality for the main verb, it may be referred to as WOULD-

support, analagous to DO-support in the indicative. This has been carried out to the extent that *would* is the most commonly encountered form of all subjunctives and rarely has any additional meaning except as the modal marker.

The practical value of these observations lies in their potential for illuminating regions of English which are highly intuitive and have traditionally been seen as subtle and inexplicable. They should give the ESL teacher and student further tools for understanding some of the more mysterious and troublesome areas of grammar and usage. Since other western European languages use their related subjunctives more consciously, students from those language backgrounds, at least, should have a direct intuitive ability to apply this perspective to their study of English.

APPENDIX A

Teachers' Manual and Student Materials

The following pages present a condensed version of the main grammar points presented in this paper, in a form designed to be useable as a brief introduction for ESL teachers for classroom use. Where possible, the first page of each section is designed to serve as a single-page student handout. Since this is a grammatical area likely to be more thoroughly discussed in advanced ESL classes, entire sections may be appropriate for some students, although some discussion of terms would undoubtedly be necessary.

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INTRODUCTION

"Subjunctive verb forms have almost disappeared in Modern English. About the only survivor is 'were' instead of 'was' in such expressions as: If he were here, he would be happy." (1)

Statements such as this are typical of even the informed speaker's impression of the role of the subjunctive in English today. Consulting a comprehensive grammar such as Marcella Frank's *Modern English* adds only a handful of other infrequent uses which only the more advanced ESL student would have any reason to be exposed to.

This is unfortunate for two reasons. First, it obscures an active and productive set of relationships which are indeed at work in English, and second, it makes the ESL teacher and students work a lot harder than necessary to understand some of the "unexplainable" features of English verbs. Many ESL students will, in fact, be used to the idea of the subjunctive from their native languages, and this makes it a productive tool for explaining, in particular, the shades of meaning within the modal verbs and the conditional.

While I started out thinking only in terms of western European languages, I soon discovered that any language I inquired about had some functional equivalent of the subjunctive: some way of expressing the uncertainty or less-than-factual quality of a verb.

1. Jackson, Eugene, *German Made Simple*, New York 1965

The reason the subjunctive is "hidden" in English is that its form has almost completely fallen together with that of the past tense. However, in all those cases where a past-appearing verb is being used in a present-time sense, the subjunctive is at work. We can see how this came to be by looking at modern German whose system is closely related to that of English, but where the form has remained just enough more distinct to be readily traceable.

We can also look at Spanish to see an example of a well developed system in a familiar language where the subjunctive form has remained distinct, so that the language can rely on it to do a lot of work. And from that we can see the kinds of functions the subjunctive is still performing in English.

Like me, many people were intimidated by the subjunctive in high school French class because they told us, "don't even try to understand the subjunctive; it's way too mysterious." In fact, the only reasons it's mysterious in French or English are that the form may not be obvious at first, and that no one teaches it as if it were something that we use easily every day.

I hope this paper will show you that you already have a natural feeling for using the subjunctive which you can share with your students to help them understand English better too.

What is Mode (Mood)?

Verbs vary in several important ways to show something about the action being described. For instance, they can change their tense to indicate the time of the action. They can change in person and number to show agreement with the subject of the verb. They can change their voice from active to passive and so change the "direction" of the action. They can change their aspect to show whether the action is on-going or completed. And they can make each of these changes independently of the others, which is to say that all of the above are independent features of the conjugation of the verb.

There is another independent feature of the verb known as mode (or mood) which shows the conclusiveness of the action expressed, and which shows three possibilities: indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

The Indicative is the normal work-a-day mode for most verbs. As its name implies, it serves to tell or indicate. It indicates what is going on ("Here comes John"), it describes ("You look wonderful today"), it states facts ("The house is a mess"). It is conclusive, but can be softened as well by expressions such as "perhaps" and "maybe".

The Imperative is the mode which expresses wishes and desires in the form of commands. When you say "Finish your lima beans," it does not indicate that the lima beans are finished, but only that you wish them to be finished. The one may or may not follow from the other.

The Subjunctive is the mood which indicates the uncertainty of things. Most English speakers will recognize it in the expression "if I were younger..." where it shows something not to be true (2). But the subjunctive, as we shall see, is also the mode which covers the large gray areas of doubt, uncertainty, speculation and disclaimer.

When you say "I *would* visit them if I *had* time" instead of the more definite "I *will* visit them if I *have* time," or "I *could* mow the lawn this afternoon" instead of "I *can* mow the lawn today," you are using the subjunctive to leave yourself a little elbow-room, to show that your intentions are not absolute. In fact, like Spanish or Japanese, we use the subjunctive a lot to soften what we say. It is, as we shall see, the difference between "I *want* it" and "I *would like* it (please.)"

2. Note that this is quite different from the indicative statement "I am not younger..." which is certainly true.

THE SUBJUNCTIVE

The subjunctive is the *mode* of a verb which expresses uncertainty or a condition which is not true. The other modes are *indicative* which is the normal mode which describes things, and *imperative* which is the mode for commands. The English subjunctive has two forms, S1 and S2. Both of them closely resemble other verb forms.

The Subjunctive 1 is much less common. It is the older form, and is found in many sayings and expressions which sound old-fashioned or very formal today. It is now mainly used for "Imperative Expressions". Like the imperative, the S1's form is the same as the base or infinitive form of the verb. It is only distinct for the 3rd person singular, where it leaves off the *-s*, and for the verb *to be*, where it is *be* for all persons.

The Subjunctive 2 is quite common, especially with modal verbs. It is used in a large number of situations to show doubt, uncertainty, possibility or potential. It is not usually required by specific grammatical structures, but rather by what the speaker wishes to express. The S2's form is the same as the simple past tense. It is only distinct for the verb *to be*, where it uses *were* instead of *was* for the 1st and 3rd person.

The S1 and S2 are both present tenses. The S1 has no past tense, while the S2 uses the perfect tense for the past with the auxiliary verb in the subjunctive. Do not be misled by traditional Latinate grammars which refer to the S2 as the past subjunctive because of its form.

But if the present tense S2 form is identical to the indicative (normal) past tense, how can it be recognized? Very simply, by being a past-tense form in a present (or future) tense context. For example:

If I *want* your advice, I'll ask for it. (pres., ind.)
 If I *wanted* your advice, I *would* ask for it. (pres., subj.)
 If I *wanted* your advice, I *asked* for it. (past, ind.)
 If I *had wanted* your advice, I *would have asked*... (past, subj.)

In this example the present subjunctive (sentence 2) has the clear meaning of "I don't want your advice."

In this table are the indicative and subjunctive forms for *to be*, and two typical verbs with the contrasting forms in italic. To give the subjunctives a more natural sound, put *that...* before the S1 and *if...* before the S2.

Present Indicative	Subjunctive 1	Past Indicative	Present Subjunctive 2	Past S2
to be	<i>that...</i>		<i>if...</i>	<i>if...</i>
<i>I am</i>	<i>I be</i>	<i>I was</i>	<i>I were</i>	I had been
<i>you are</i>	<i>you be</i>	you were	you were	you had been
<i>it is</i>	<i>it be</i>	<i>it was</i>	<i>it were</i>	it had been
<i>they are</i>	<i>they be</i>	they were	they were	they had been
to go				
I go	I go	I went	I went	I had gone
you go	you go	you went	you went	you had gone
<i>she goes</i>	<i>she go</i>	she went	she went	she had gone
they go	they go	they went	they went	they had gone
to live				
I live	I live	I lived	I lived	I had lived
you live	you live	you lived	you lived	you had lived
<i>he lives</i>	<i>he live</i>	he lived	he lived	he had lived
they live	they live	they lived	they lived	they had lived

THE S1

IMPERATIVE EXPRESSIONS

This large group, also known as expressions of urgency or request, includes personal or impersonal expressions which include an indirect or reported imperative to request, command, recommend, or otherwise indicate the subject's wish. The wish can be expressed through a verb, noun or adjective. The desired result is in a dependent clause (beginning with *that...*) with the verb in the Subjunctive 1, indicating that it is not something which has happened, but rather someone's wish or idea of what is possible.

In the following examples, the verb *leave* is in the S1.

Verbs

We request that he leave.
demand
require
suggest

Adjectives

It is essential that he leave.	She is eager that he leave.
necessary	determined
desirable	desirous
demand	
required	
requested	
imperative	
acceptable	

Nouns

The suggestion that he leave went unheeded.
requirement
etc...

We ask that the Director be notified in any cases requiring...

The doctor has requested that Peter remain at home.

The committee has recommended that students be allowed to...

This is far from a complete list of such Imperative Expressions.

Because the form of the imperative is the same as the S1, it may be helpful to think of these Imperative Expressions and other S1 examples as simply non-direct or reported imperatives. The clearest example is the third person imperative, now archaic and little used:

Long *live* the King. The devil *take* thy soul.

The more modern form is a paraphrase with *May...* or *Let...*

In developing a more general understanding of Imperative Expressions some of the traditionally miscellaneous cases may fit within its scope.

Negative Purpose

I didn't tell him the news lest he *spread* it all over town.

where *lest* functions as the negative equivalent of *that*.

Unaccomplished Result

...a factor which nixed plans that veterans *be used* again in service.

THE MODAL VERBS

The modal verbs, or modal auxiliaries, are one of the places where the Subjunctive 2 (S2) is most frequently used in English. Since modal verbs often express intention, suggestion, or possibility they work together with the subjunctive in meaning as well.

There are four classes of verbs in English, grouped by how they operate: active verbs, verbs of being or mental state, auxiliary verbs, and modals.

Modals are grammatically distinct because:

- they do not take -s on the 3rd person singular (**he cans, *she mays*)
- they do not use the continuous form (**I am canning, *they are musting*)
- they have no infinitive form or usage (**to can, *to will*)
- they have no future usage (**I will can, *he will must*).

In the last two cases, they rely on their phrasal helpers when such a form is needed.

THE MODAL AUXILIARIES

<u>Present Indicative</u>	<u>Past or Subjunctive</u>	<u>Phrasal Substitute</u>
will	would	(to) be going to
can	could	(to) be able to
shall	should	(to) ought (to)
may	might	
must	had to	(to) have to

/

* The asterisk (star) is used to indicate forms which do not exist.

Will (would) is the most common of the modals. It is used to mark the future tense of a verb, without adding any additional meaning of its own. Similarly, in the subjunctive *would* simply serves as a carrier for the subjunctive. Any differences in meaning come purely from the change of mode. In modern English, speakers often prefer to use *would + simple verb* instead of the S2 form of the verb itself, making *would* probably the most commonly encountered form of the subjunctive.

Shall (should) has come to be used to show will or volition in contrast to the simple future of *will*. It has an emphatic quality. *Should* has shifted, however, to acquire the sense of obligation or recommendation in the subjunctive.

Ought, on the other hand, is used to express this same obligation or recommendation in indicative mode. The meaning is very similar, but *ought*, being indicative, is probably a bit stronger. Historically *ought* was the subjunctive of another verb, and it still retains much of the subjunctive feeling of suggestion or softened assertion. It is unusual for a modal because it requires *to* before a following affirmative (but not negative) verb, revealing again a bit of its history as a linking active verb. It can also exist as an infinitive, and is included with the modals as much for its meaning and function, even though its grammar is transitional.

Must is the other present-day modal which historically comes from the past/S2 of a different verb. *Must* now functions in the indicative with the meaning of strong obligation or requirement. But as it does not have any further past/S2 form, the phrasal *to have to* was all that was available to

take additional inflection, and so is used for the past, the S2 and the negative. This together with the deceptive *must not* makes it a complex and difficult verb.

Can (could) expresses the ability to do the action of the following verb. Like an active verb, it has a strong sense in the indicative, but it is an auxilliary and can not stand by itself. The subjunctive *could* is a very frequent form because it can be used to express (or enquire about) the possibility of an action or situation in a hypothetical manner.

May (might), on the other hand, in the indicative seems to express the same idea through its meaning as other verbs express through a shift to subjunctive mode: a more vague possibility or the uncertainty of an event. Thus it occurs as a substitute for the subjunctive and in formulations such as *maybe*. *Might*, as the subjunctive member of the pair, seems to express even more uncertain possibilities.

We can then establish the following rough hierarchy of modal of assertion. It may be impossible to determine the exact distance between each pair since they usually do not occur in free variation, but in distinctive environments.

He will help us.	Will you help us?
He can help us.	Can you help us?
He would help us.	Would you help us?
He could help us.	Could you help us?
He may help us.	May I help you?
He might help us.	Might you help us?

THE CONDITIONALIndicative: Factual or Probable

Future: Prediction

If gold drops any further, we will take a substantial loss.

Present: Neutral time

On Sundays, if it's nice, we go to the park.

Past: Past habit

If Joe washed, I dried the dishes.

Past unknown

If he was here, he probably ate dinner already.

Subjunctive: Imaginative or Improbable

Future: Wish (unfulfilled)

If only she would say yes, we could get married right away.

Present: Hypothetical

If he wanted to ask you, he could phone.

Counterfactual

If it weren't raining, we would leave.

Past: Contrary to fact (condition unfulfilled)

If he hadn't been on time, I would have left without him.

Other equivalents of *if*:

as if	suppose that	whether
even if	provided that	as though
if only	in the event that	

The condition contrary to fact (If I *were* rich...) is the most commonly recognized case of the subjunctive. While most grammars consider a number of isolated cases of the conditional (typically about four), the complete set consists of six types: three tenses x two modes, as seen in the preceding chart.

The present and future tenses refer to present and future time in an obvious way; the past tenses have developed a somewhat more idiomatic usage. The indicative mode is used for simple, known, or affirmative cases, the subjunctive to show improbability or contrariness-to-fact. The sentences in the chart are of the simple parallel type in which both clauses agree in tense and mode. Generally, the basic tense of a conditional sentence refers to the condition (*if*) clause, because there is no grammatical restriction on the tense or mode of the result clause. Rather, in both speech and writing, time and mode are mixed between the two clauses as logical conditions permit.

The Future Indicative is used for predictions of simple cause and effect. Because future time in English is so frequently expressed by a present-tense verb or paraphrase, *will* does not usually occur in the *if*-clause. In that case, the two most useful guides to recognizing future condition are *will* in the result clause, and your own logical perception of the time involved.

If any are broken or missing, you will be charged for them.

If this keeps up, I'm going to go nuts.

The general rule that *will* or *would* never occurs in the *if*-clause is only a guideline; contrary examples appear to emphasize the future aspect.

The Present Indicative also shows a simple cause and effect, relationship, or conclusion, the latter usually with *must*, or some equivalent. Because the present tense in English is often used generally, i.e. neutral or unmarked for time, the actual time reference is often universal, future or even past, relying on other cues to specify details of the time, if necessary.

If it's going well, it's safest to leave it alone.

If Mikey likes it, it must be good.

If he gets to Hartford before the storm, he's home free.

But if the German troops don't get out of Russia before the winter sets in, they will be faced with...

The Past Indicative is used for unknown events in the past, since known events take *because* or some equivalent instead of *if*. Generally speaking, events are unknown because the speaker was not present or has not received a full report. They have a sense of conjecture and usually occur with *probably*, etc. Because the verb form of the *if*-clause (past indicative) is identical to that of the present subjunctive for most verbs, it is the result clause which shows the indicative mode distinctly.

If he was here, he probably ate dinner already.

If LA just had a major earthquake, many people must have been hurt.

If they didn't get lost, their car must have broken down.

The Future Subjunctive is used for a future event which can be imagined, but is unlikely to occur. Often it expresses improbable or impossible wishes. The subjunctive shows the speaker does not expect them to come true. In this case, *would* in the *if*-clause is the distinctive feature, while *just* or *only* are often included as intensifiers.

If he would just stop moaning so much, he'd be able to figure it out.

If only tomorrow morning wouldn't come so early...

If they'd invite us, we'd go in a second.

If a student should miss class, a note will be (*ind.*) sent home.

The Present Subjunctive is used as generally as the present indicative. Its meaning can extend to the hypothetical--expressing doubt, uncertainty, or conjecture, or to the counterfactual--expressing the untrue nature of the idea in the *if*-clause. The subjunctive form can be the simple verb, an auxiliary, a modal auxiliary, or even a number of paraphrases. The reference to present or future time can be implicit or explicit.

If his theory could be proven, it would cause a major reevaluation.

If we got there Tuesday, we could stay a week.

If he weren't such a jerk, maybe the girls would like him.

I'd leave soon if I weren't having such a good time.

The Past Subjunctive sees frequent use to indicate a condition contrary to fact in the past. Because the events of the past are known, the subjunctive is used to show that the condition expressed in the *if*-clause did not come true so neither did the result. Because the simple past form is used for present subjunctive, the past requires the use of a perfect tense, with either an auxiliary or a modal auxiliary.

But if she had said one word about it, I would have told her ...

If you hadn't come along then, I don't know what I would have done.

If he couldn't have done even that much, I would have just given up.

Beyond this, the subjunctive can be used with any of the compound tenses of the indicative. There also exist statements in which the condition in the *if* clause is paraphrased or implicit rather than expressed directly. Otherwise, however, they completely resemble other conditionals.

Conditions permitting, we will go skiing next weekend.

Oh, could you? That would be really helpful.

Knock the chip off my shoulder, and I'll knock the block off yours.

There is an optional phrase structure for the subjunctive in which the *if* is left out and the verb moved to the front of the phrase. This form now has an old-fashioned feel and very restricted useage.

Were this not reason enough... (If this were not...)

Had we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, *were* no crime.

(If we hadwould be...)

THE S2

SUBJUNCTIVE OF POTENTIAL

The Subjunctive 2 serves in a wide variety of expressions to show uncertainty, improbability, non-reality and other forms of unrealized potential. Most often it is the speaker's intention instead of the grammatical construction which governs choice of the subjunctive. Many examples of the conditional also fit within the S2 Expressions of Potential. Some of the further contexts which call for the S2 are:

Purpose and Unaccomplished Result

The father gave his son money so that he *might buy* a suit.

He waited all evening so that he *could* see her.

Speculation/conjecture/uncertainty

It is possible that they *might/would*...

Could he have forgotten all about it?

He *should* be home by now.

Impersonal Expressions

It's time we *started*. It's about time they *came*.

The subjunctive here implies that the action has not yet happened.

Indefinite Antecedent

I'm looking for someone who *could/might* help me.

(I don't know that such a person exists.)

Imagined Possibility and Concessive Clauses (negative possibility)

I have so much time now, I *could* go on trips.

This *would be* fabulous weather for all kinds of stuff.

You *wouldn't believe* me even if I *did tell* you the truth.

Even if you *gave* me \$100, I *wouldn't do* it.

The most frequently encountered S2 forms are the modals, especially *would*. As mentioned before, the use of *would* is so prominent that it frequently replaces, without additional meaning, the use of S2 with the main verb to form a subjunctive sentence.

If you *stood* up to him...

If you *would stand* up to him...

In some cases, this happens to the degree that the main verb is incapable of carrying the subjunctive meaning, and only the *would* form seems acceptable. Different rules for the use of modal/subjunctive combinations is one conspicuous feature of various dialects of English.

SOFTENED ASSERTION

Softened Assertion is another major use of the Subjunctive 2; it is used to show polite register. As in many other languages, the use of the subjunctive in both statements and requests has the effect of softening the verb and adding a respectful quality. It can function as a polite imperative meaning "I suggest that..." The following examples, when compared with the indicative, show how the subjunctive adds deference, politeness or reserve.

Assertion

It *would* be better if we *could* take a little extra time.
It will be better if we can take a little extra time.

I believe he *would* help us.
I believe he will help us.

Perhaps it *would* be easier if we *tried* a different approach.
Perhaps it will be easier if we try a different approach.

Request

Would you bring me that book?
Will you bring me that book?

Could we take the rest of the afternoon off?
Can we take the rest of the afternoon off?

That *wouldn't* be a piece of cheese left, *would* it?
That isn't a piece of cheese left, is it?

Preference

I'd rather wait until I've finished what I'm doing first.

I *would* love to go out to dinner Thursday.

Offer

Did you want to go?
Do you want to go?

You *didn't* want another cookie, *did* you?
You don't want another cookie, do you?

VERBS OF MENTAL STATE & EMOTION

The S2 can also occur after verbs of thought or desire to express potential. The usage in English is assigned to the class of verbs of mental state, which are grammatically distinct because they use the simple rather than continuous present. However, it is their meaning as verbs of emotion which requires the subjunctive, expressing an opinion about a hypothetical event, rather than a completed one.

I believe he *would help* us.

I wish he *would get* here already.

I hope that it *would be* possible...

I doubt that he *would be* willing to.

I wish I *had known* about this matter several weeks ago.

PERIPHRASTIC SUBJUNCTIVE

The periphrastic subjunctive (PS) was mentioned briefly in our discussion of the modal verbs. This may be an appropriate place to return to it since it figures prominently in polite register and softened assertion. In effect, the periphrastic subjunctive uses a verb with an indicative meaning which includes the features of uncertainty or potential. The clearest example is *may*: the meaning of *may* as an auxiliary is that of possibility, so that its indicative sense is parallel to the meaning which the subjunctive mode adds to other verbs. This means that *may*, *maybe*, etc. can be used as an alternate means to expressing the subjunctive's meaning.

No matter how clever he *may be* he won't get out of this one.

It is my express wish that my body *may be* buried privately

without [public ceremony]. -George Washington

In the first case, the PS replaces an S1 which in this use now sounds archaic (3), while in the second the S1 with simple *be* would be more expected today.

In fact, it is the rich repertoire of paraphrases which makes some areas of the subjunctive so nebulous in English today.

If you could come this way, we'd like to kinda keep this group
together if possible.

3. *Be* it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

REPORTED SPEECH

The last remaining major use of the subjunctive is that of disclaimer, allegation and reported speech. Our choice of mode gives us the ability to indicate our support or disavowal of information that we are quoting from another source. If we wish to confirm the source's statement, we can choose the indicative. If, on the other hand, we wish to question it, or remain neutral, the subjunctive shows our reserve.

Unfortunately, traditional grammar treats reported speech quite differently. Because the S2 form is identical to the past-tense form and because the reporting verb is usually past (for obvious reasons) the conventional rule calls for present context to place the reported verb in the past, and for past context to use the past perfect, while in the same breath decrying the fact that observance of this rule is falling away.

This is because the rule actually observed is to vary the reported verb between indicative and subjunctive in the original tense depending on the speaker's attitude towards the information presented.

Carl wrote me that he's *coming* tomorrow. (I consider it certain.)

Carl wrote me that he *was coming* tomorrow, or:

Carl wrote me that he'd *come* tomorrow. (I don't know if it's true.)

The picture is further complicated by the broad spectrum of interactions between the tenses of the reporting verb (generally a past tense), the reported verb, and the relationship of the reported action to the present time (i.e. whether an originally future event is now past, etc.)

He told me he'll *get* it tomorrow. (direct report, indicative)

He told me he *would get* it tomorrow. (neutral or reserved, subjunctive)

He told me he *got* it yesterday. (direct, past indicative)

He told me he *had gotten* it yesterday. (reserved, past subjunctive)

This paradigm is already quite cloudy if we examine such sentences in isolation. Without a discourse context it may prove impossible to establish the tense/mode, for example, of:

He told me he *would get* it yesterday.

As opposed to "He told me he *would have gotten* it yesterday," which is clearly the subjunctive of unrealized intention.

The conventions of reported speech are most effectively discussed within the larger context of tenses of the Bull framework, according to which there are only three simple temporal tenses -- past, present, and future -- and that all the compound tenses result from the interaction of these, relative to the point of reference, or simple tense of the overall statement. Those not familiar with this work are referred to the discussion in Bull, W E. *Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics*. Ronald Press, New York, 1965, Ch. 14.

However, it is difficult to examine the relationship of time, tense and mode in reported speech in isolation since the critical feature of the speaker's intent is often impossible to determine. Simply let it be said that when the subjunctive is taken into account, a significantly different analysis of reported speech seems necessary.

While the church maintained that the sun *revolved* around the earth, Galileo knew that the earth *turns* around the sun.

DISCLAIMER

A clearer sub-set of reported speech is that of disclaimer, where the speaker's intention is to deny the possibility of the reported verb.

He denies that he *would* even *consider* such a thing.

I didn't say I *would be* there.

Not every example of disclaimer is reported speech:

Grade B is recommended for sidewall application. It *could* be used on a roof where slope is over 4/12.

The practical value of these observations on the English subjunctive may lie in their potential for illuminating regions of English which are highly intuitive and have traditionally been seen as subtle and inexplicable.

They should give the ESL teacher and student further tools for understanding some of the more mysterious and troublesome areas of grammar and usage. Since most western European languages (and many others) use their related subjunctives more consciously, students from those language backgrounds, at least, should have a direct intuitive ability to apply this perspective to their study of English.

APPENDIX B

AUGMENTED PHRASE STRUCTURE RULES

The analysis of the role of the subjunctive in English given in this paper expands upon its traditional domain to the degree that to account for it within the rules of Transformational Grammar the phrase structure rules governing the action of the verb would need to be modified as follows.

Please refer to *The Grammar Book*, * for a more complete discussion of the phrase structure rules.

- 4. Aux --> T(ense) M(ode) (PM) (Perf) (Prog) (Pass)
- 5. T --> [Past]
[Pres]
- 5a. M --> [Ind]
[Imp]
[Subj]
- 5b. Imp --> VP + NP-deletion
- 5c. Subj --> (trigger) [S1 (base)] + DO support --> WOULD support
[S2 (past)]
- 9. VP --> (MV: modal verb) [BE] , etc.
[V]
[PV]

* Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, Newbury House, 1983

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