ON THE USEFULNESS OF USING FORMAL AND SEMANTIC SIMILARITIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AND ITALIAN HYPOTHETICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Antoanela Marta MARDAR
"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi

Abstract. *Starting from some theoretical aspects regarding hypothetical meaning, the present paper focuses on a series of relevant hypothetical constructions used in English and their corresponding structures in Italian with the aim of identifying formal and semantic similarities between these structures in the two languages envisaged. Moreover, reference is made to a series of structures in which the English Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo' express theoretical meaning with the aim of proving that the formal and semantic aspects shared by these two languages may facilitate the better understanding and correct use of both hypothetical and theoretical constructions by English learners who study Italian and vice versa.*

Key words: *hypothetical meaning, negative truth commitment, shared constructions, theoretical meaning, truth neutrality*

Introductory remarks

People use communication to express ideas, opinions, feelings or emotions and, in doing this, they make numerous lexical, grammatical and/or stylistic choices of which they are not always aware. Such choices become obvious when people are in the situation of expressing their ideas, opinions, feelings or emotions in a foreign language.

Since actions are an important part of our lives and of our daily communication, the speakers' choice of specific verb forms meant to provide relevant information about the time reference and the real or hypothetical nature of an action becomes essential.

Hypothetical meaning is often contrasted with factual meaning. If the former is associated with verb forms expressing imaginary actions/situations which are contrary to reality, the latter is traceable in numerous verbs forms of the Indicative Mood which are selected by speakers when reference has to be made to real actions/situations. Consequently, speakers choose hypothetical sentences when they need to make assumptions that an action did not, does not or will not take place, the situation imagined by them being in fact contrary to reality and factual sentences when they need to express a fact. To put it differently, the fundamental difference between **hypothetical** and **factual** meaning lies in the fact that the former "is characterized by ***negative truth commitment***", whereas the latter "is characterized by ***positive truth commitment***" (Croitoru 209).

1. Hypothetical constructions in English

The most common constructions requiring the use of a hypothetical verb form in English, i.e. a form of the Subjunctive, are those implying the presence of such specific indicators as: **wish**, **if only**, **it's (high) time, suppose, as if/though** and **would rather**.

Similarly to other finite verb forms in English, the Subjunctive allows speakers to alternate between present, past and future time reference, each of these time references implying a specific tense choice on their part. If speakers want to make assumptions about a present/future hypothetical or imaginary action/situation, the tense to be used will be the Past Subjunctive[5], whereas the assumptions about a hypothetical or imaginary past action/situation

[5] Also called '*hypothetical past*' (Quirk et. al 1010 in Croitoru 217).

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will be expressed by means of the Perfect Subjunctive[6]. Although Past and Perfect Subjunctive are formally identical with the Past Tense and Past Perfect Tense of the Indicative, respectively, they express essentially different types of actions/ situations. The two tenses of the Subjunctive express hypothetical or imaginary actions/situations contrary to reality, whereas the corresponding verb forms of the Indicative make reference to real actions/situations. In addition, the Past and Perfect Subjunctive have a temporal reference different from that of the corresponding verb forms associated with the Indicative Mood:

TENSE/MOOD	**TIME REFERENCE**	**HYPOTHESIS/REALITY**
Past Subjunctive	hypothetical present/ future	contrary to the present/future reality
Past Tense /Indicative	real past	past reality
Perfect Subjunctive	hypothetical past	contrary to the past reality
Past Perfect /Indicative	real earlier past	earlier past reality

1.1. All the aspects regarding the hypothetical nature of the actions/situations expressed by the two tenses of the English Subjunctive and the present/future or past time reference made by these modal verb forms may be proved irrespective of the specifically marked construction (**wish**, **if only**, **it's (high) time, suppose, as if/though** and **would rather**) taken into account. The examples below are relevant in this respect:

PAST SUBJUNCTIVE→ **HYPOTHETICAL** PRESENT ACTION/ SITUATION → **CONTRARY TO THE PRESENT REALITY**	**PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE→** **HYPOTHETICAL** PAST ACTION/ SITUATION → **CONTRARY TO THE PAST REALITY**
*I **wish** Jane **were** here with me **now**.* (but she is not here with me now)	*I **wish** Jane **hadn't bought** that book **yesterday**.* (but she bought that book yesterday)
***If only** my mum **could see** me **now**. She would be so proud of me.* (but she cannot see me now)	***If only** they **hadn't left** for Paris **last Friday**. They could have come to my birthday party on Saturday*. (but they left for Paris last Friday)
*Tom talks about me **as if** I **were** his greatest enemy.* (but I am not his enemy)	*He behaves **as if** I **had destroyed** their relationship*. (but I did not destroy their relationship)
***It's time** you **changed** your attitude towards voluntary work.* (but you do not change your	***It's time** you **had found** a better job.* (but you

[6] Also called '*hypothetical past perfective'* (Quirk et. al 1010 in Croitoru 217).

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attitude)

*I **would rather** he **phoned** us **every week**.* (but he does not phone us every week)

did not find a better job)

*I **would rather** he **hadn't eaten** all the pizza **yesterday**.* (but he ate all the pizza yesterday)

1.2. Hypothetical meaning is also visible in the English **conditional sentence**. A standard conditional sentence is made up of a main clause and a conditional clause and, generally speaking, the conditional clause states the condition which needs to be fulfilled in order that the action in the main clause should take place. However, out of the standard conditional sentences existing in English, only types II and III are relevant for demonstrating the hypothetical nature of the actions/states expressed by Past and Perfect Subjunctive and their association with a time reference different from that suggested by the verb form. In conditional sentences type II the Past Subjunctive used in the conditional clause expresses an imaginary present or future action/ situation contrary to the present/future reality. Similarly, in conditional sentences type III the Perfect Subjunctive makes reference to an imaginary past action/situation contrary to the past reality. The following examples are a good illustration of what has been stated:

e.g. *Jack would surely help you solve this problem if he **were** here **today**.* (but he is not here today)

*Jack would have helped you solve this problem **last week** if **he hadn't been** abroad*. (but he was abroad last week)

2. Hypothetical constructions in Italian

If hypothetical meaning is traditionally associated with the Subjunctive mood in English, the corresponding mood used to express imaginary actions/situations contrary to reality in Italian is the so-called 'congiuntivo'. The Italian congiuntivo has four tenses, i.e. 'presente', 'passato', 'imperfetto' and 'trapassato', but special attention will be devoted to 'imperfetto' and 'trapassato' which are relevant for the hypothetical constructions analyzed in the present section of the paper. The two tenses are used by Italian speakers in various instances and are often associated with specific types of subordinate clauses (direct object clauses, comparative[7] and conditional clauses, among others). In such clauses the Italian 'congiuntivo imperfetto' is used to express actions/situations impossible to achieve in the present, and when speakers need to make reference to actions/situations which were impossible to achieve in the past the tense 'congiuntivo trapassato' is selected. The conditional clause is called '**protasi'**[8] in Italian and, together with the main or regent clause, called '**apodosi',** forms the conditional sentence most often referred as '**periodo ipotettico**'(Serianni 588).

2.1. Since the most common constructions requiring the use of a hypothetical verb form in English are conditioned by the presence of such specific indicators as: **wish**, **if only**, **it's (high) time, suppose, as if/though** and **would rather**, a parallel will be drawn to demonstrate that the corresponding indicators used in Italian also require the selection of verb

[7] Since tenses of the Italian congiuntivo are used in comparative clauses introduced by **come se** to express hypothesis, such clauses are also named "comparative modali/ ipotetiche" (Marinucci 377).

[8] 'Apodosi', from the Greek word *apodosis* means 'consequence' and it is used to refer to the main or regent clause, whereas 'protasi'**,** from the Greek word *protasis* means 'premise' and it is used in Italian to denote the conditional clause. The conditional sentence is called 'periodo ipotetico' in Italian, and less frequently 'proposizione condizionale' (Marinucci 379).

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forms which express hypothetical actions/situations contrary to reality. For present reference, the English Past Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo imperfetto' express hypothetical actions/situations contrary to the present reality:

HYPOTHETICAL PRESENT ACTION/ SITUATION →
CONTRARY TO THE PRESENT REALITY

EN: PAST SUBJUNCTIVE	**IT: CONGIUNTIVO IMPERFETTO**
*I **wish** Jane **were** here with me **now**.* (but she is not here with me now)	***Vorrei** che Jane **fosse** qui con me adesso*. (ma lei non è qui con me adesso)
***If only** my mum **could see** me **now**. She would be so proud of me.* (but she cannot see me now)	***Se solo** mia mamma **potesse** vedermi adesso. Sarebbe così orgogliosa di me.* (ma lei non può vedermi adesso)
*Tom talks about me **as if** I **were** his greatest enemy.* (but I am not his enemy)	*Tom parla di me **come se** io **fossi** il suo più grande nemico.* (ma io non sono il suo nemico)
***It's time** you **changed** your attitude towards voluntary work.* (but you do not change your attitude)	***È ora** che tu **cambiassi** il tuo atteggiamento verso il volontariato*. (ma tu non cambi il tuo atteggiamento)
*I **would rather** he **phoned** us **every week**.* (but he does not phone us every week)	***Preferirei** che lui ci **telefonasse** ogni settimana.* (ma lui non ci telefona ogni settimana)

Similarly, the English Perfect Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo trapassato' are used for past reference to express imaginary or hypothetical actions/situations contrary to the past reality:

HYPOTHETICAL PAST ACTION/ SITUATION →
CONTRARY TO THE PAST REALITY

EN: PERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE	**IT: CONGIUNTIVO TRAPASSATO**
*I **wish** Jane **hadn't bought** that book **yesterday**.* (but she bought that book yesterday)	***Vorrei** che Jane **non avesse comprato** quel libro ieri.* (ma ha comprato quel libro ieri)
***If only** they **hadn't left** for Paris **last Friday**. They could have come to my birthday party on Saturday*. (but they left for Paris)	***Se solo** loro **non fossero partiti** per Parigi il venerdì scorso. Avrebbero potuto venire alla mia festa di compleanno sabato*. (ma sono partiti per Parigi)
*He behaves **as if** I **had destroyed** their relationship*. (but I did not destroy their relationship)	*Si comporta **come se** io **avessi distrutto** la loro relazione.* (ma io non ho distrutto la loro relazione)

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It's time *you* ***had found*** *a better job.* (but you didn't find a better job)	***È ora*** *che tu* ***abbia trovato*** *un lavoro migliore*. (ma tu non hai trovato un lavoro migliore)
I ***would rather*** *he* ***hadn't eaten*** *all the pizza* ***yesterday***. (but he ate all the pizza yesterday)	***Preferirei*** *che lui* ***non avesse mangiato*** *tutta la pizza ieri*. (ma lui ha mangiato tutta la pizza ieri)

2.2. The present – past symmetry between English and Italian is obvious in conditional sentences, (types II and III), as well. The table below clearly illustrates this fact:

THE CONDITIONAL SENTENCE - PERIODO IPOTETICO
STANDARD STRUCTURES

IF CLAUSE	**MAIN CLAUSE**
TYPE II – used to express **imaginary things or situations,** something very unlikely to happen	
PAST TENSE (except for WERE) **CONGIUNTIVO IMPERFETTO** **e.g.** *If I* ***were*** *twenty years younger* *Se* ***avessi*** *vent'anni di meno*	**PRESENT CONDITIONAL** **CONDIZIONALE PRESENTE** *I* ***would know*** *how to behave in such circumstances.* ***saprei*** *come comportarmi in tale situazione.*
TYPE III – used to express **impossibility,** what did not happen in the past	
PAST PERFECT **CONGIUNTIVO TRAPASSATO** **e.g.** *If I* ***had had*** *more money* *Se* ***avessi avuto*** *piu' soldi,*	**PAST CONDITIONAL** **CONDIZIONALE PASSATO** *I* ***would have bought*** *this house.* ***avrei comprato*** *questa casa.*

However, Italian allows for more flexibility with respect to the tenses used in the main and conditional clauses, hypothetical verb forms alternating with various tenses of the Indicative Mood.

Taking into discussion the possible alternations of verb forms in the two clauses of conditional sentences, Marinucci suggests a formal classification of 'periodo ipotetico' into: 1. conditional sentences built with the tenses of the Indicative, 2. conditional sentences built with the Conditional in the main clause ('apodosi') and 'congiuntivo' in the conditional clause ('protasi') and 3. mixed conditional sentences.

The first category of conditional sentences includes the following possible combinations of verb tenses, all of them expressing reality in the present, past or future (Marinucci 381):

PROTASI/ IF CLAUSE	**APODOSI/ MAIN CLAUSE**
PRESENTE *Se* ***vieni***	**PRESENTE** *mi* ***fa*** *piacere*
PRESENTE *Se* ***prendi*** *il treno delle 5*	**FUTURO** ***arriverai*** *in tempo per la ceremonia*

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FUTURO	**FUTURO**
*Se **avrò** fame*	***mangerò***
PASSATO PROSSIMO	**PASSATO PROSSIMO**
*Se ti **sei comportato** così*	***hai fatto** bene*
PASSATO REMOTO	**PASSATO REMOTO**
*Se durante la guerra le cose **andarono** male*	*la colpa **non fu** solo dei capi militari*
IMPERFETTO	**IMPERFETTO**
*Se **voleva** intervenire nella discussione*	***poteva** farlo liberamente*

As far as the second type of conditional sentences are concerned, i.e. those built with 'congiuntivo' in the secondary clause and the Conditional in the main clause, Marinucci (ibid.) makes reference to the following possible combinations:

PROTASI/ IF CLAUSE	**APODOSI/ MAIN CLAUSE**
CONGIUNTIVO PRESENTE	**CONDIZIONALE PRESENTE/ FUTURO**
*Qualora tu **voglia***	*Maria **partirebbe/ partirà**.*
CONGIUNTIVO IMPERFETTO	**CONDIZIONALE PRESENTE**
*Se lo **desiderasse***	*lo **avrebbe**.*
CONGIUNTIVO TRAPASSATO	**CONDIZIONALE PASSATO**
*Se lo **avesse desiderato***	*lo **avrebbe avuto**.*
CONGIUNTIVO TRAPASSATO	**CONDIZIONALE PRESENTE**
*Se mi **fossi dato da fare***	*non **avrei** queste preoccupazioni.*

Last but not least, **mixed** conditional sentences include examples which cannot be integrated in either of the first two categories mentioned above (Marinucci 382), some of the most common combinations of tenses being:

PROTASI/ IF CLAUSE	**APODOSI/ MAIN CLAUSE**
INDICATIVO IMPERFETTO	**CONDIZIONALE PASSATO**
*Se non **venivi** tu*	***sarei venuto** io da te.*
INDICATIVO PRESENTE	**IMPERATIVO**
*Se ti **sembra** inopportuno*	***fammelo** sapere..*
CONGIUNTIVO IMPERFETTO	**IMPERATIVO**
*Qualora si **intestardisse***	***mandalo** da me.*
INDICATIVO IMPERFETTO	**CONDIZIONALE PASSATO**
*Se **studiavi***	*probabilmente **saresti diventato** importante*
CONGIUNTIVO TRAPASSATO	**INDICATIVO IMPERFETTO**
*Se la manovra **fosse stata fatta** a giugno*	*la crisi **poteva** essere evitata .*

The traditional classification of conditional sentences in terms of the type of action expressed by the verbs used in the main and the conditional clauses is also relevant, because it brings to the fore the semantic distinction between **reality**, **possibility** and **unreality** and the three corresponding types of conditional sentences identifiable from this point of view: i.e. 1. conditionals expressing **reality** (tenses of the indicative in both clauses), 2. conditionals expressing **possibility** (present conditional in the main clause and 'congiuntivo imperfetto; in the conditional clause) and 3. conditionals expressing **unreality** (past conditional in the main clause and 'congiuntivo trapassato' in the conditional clause):

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> La grammatica tradizionale distingue tre tipi di periodo ipotetico a secondo che la protasi esprima: **una realtà**, il verbo è all'indicativo nella protasi e nell'apodosi (Se uno è onesto non ruba); **una possibilità**, (l'ipotesi può ancora realizzarsi), il verbo è al congiuntivo imperfetto nella protasi e al condizionale presente nell'apodosi (Se studiassi, saresti promosso) o una irrealtà (l'ipotesi non può più realizzarsi) il verbo è al congiuntivo imperfetto nella protasi e al condizionale presente nell'apodosi, in riferimento al presente (Se avesse 20 anni di meno saprei come comportarmi); il verbo è al congiuntivo trapassato nella protasi e al condizionale passato nell'apodosi in riferimento al passato (Se fosse stato onesto, non avrebbe rubato.) (Marinucci 380)

A similar approach is envisaged by Croitoru (189-193) when comparing and contrasting **open** (real, factual or neutral) conditions with **hypothetical** (closed, unreal, rejected, non-factual, counterfactual or marked) ones. If the former "*leave unresolved the question of the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the condition*", the latter "*convey the speaker's belief that the condition will not be fulfilled (for future conditions), is not fulfilled (for present conditions) or was not fulfilled (for past conditions)*". As regards the main clause, the proposition expressed by this clause is **possibly true** in the case of **open** conditions and **probably or certainly false** in the case of **hypothetical** ones.

> e.g. *If Jim is in his office he is working on the project proposal.* (If he is in his office, it is possible for him to be working on the project proposal)
> *If Mark had earned more money last year, he would have bought himself a new car.* (but Mark did not earn too much money last year so he did not buy himself an new car)

As deducible from the theoretical aspects mentioned above, English conditional sentences types 0 and I which combine various tenses of the Indicative mood are semantically equivalent with the Italian conditional sentences expressing **reality**.

> e.g. *If you mix read and blue you get violet*. → *Se mescoli rosso e blu ottieni viola*.
> (if the condition in the if clause is fulfilled the proposition in the main clause is certainly true.)
> *I will call you tomorrow if I have time.* → *Ti chiamerò domani se avrò tempo.*
> (if the condition in the if clause is fulfilled the proposition in the main clause is possibly true)

On the other hand, conditional sentences type II in English have a formal and semantic equivalent in the Italian conditionals combining present conditional in the main clause and 'congiuntivo imperfetto' in the conditional clause. The main clauses in such sentences are used in English and Italian to express **possibility** in case the imaginary actions/situations in the conditional clause are fulfilled. However, the imagined actions /situations are contrary to the reality deducible from the deep structure meaning of these clauses:

*Jack would help you solve this problem if he **were** here **today**.* (If Jack were here it would be **possible** for him to help you.)	*Jack ti aiuterebbe a risolvere questo problema se **fosse** qui oggi.* (Se Jack fosse qui sarebbe **possibile** aiutarti.)

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DEEP STRUCTURE MEANING

→ The reality is that Jack is not here today so he cannot help you.	→ La realtà è che Jack non è qui. Dunque non ti può aiutare.

As regards conditional sentences type III, they have both a formal and semantic equivalent in the Italian conditionals which combine past conditional in the main clause and 'congiuntivo trapassato' in the conditional clause to make reference to an imaginary past action/situation contrary to the past reality:

*Jack would have helped you solve this problem **last week** if **he hadn't been** abroad*. (but he was abroad last week)	*Jack ti avrebbe aiutato a risolvere questo problema la scorsa settimana se non **fosse stato** all'estero.* (ma lui è stato all'estero la scorsa settimana)

Drawing a parallel between type II and type III conditionals, mention could be made that the latter also refer to **possibility,** but in the past. In other words, if the condition in the conditional clause had been fulfilled, the action in the main clause would have been possible. The essential difference is that the imaginary past cannot be changed and such conditional sentences may strictly be used to express **unreal** and **impossible** actions/situations.

3. **Theoretical constructions in English and Italian**

The English Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo', as the moods of hypothesis in the two languages under discussion, are used in a series of other symmetrical constructions. However, different from the cases analyzed so far, the constructions to be further approached express ***theoretical meaning*** which is characterized by ***truth neutrality*** (Croitoru 209). In other words, reference will be made to constructions which do not imply the truth of the statements they contain and which leave the question of truth or falsehood open (id. 210).

In her comparative-contrastive approach to **factual** and **theoretical** meaning, Croitoru (210-214) states that the latter type of meaning is traceable in a series of constructions in which the English Subjunctive is required by specific classes of verbs (id. 242-244) or by emotive predicates:

1. verbs of **command**, e.g. *command, order, demand, insist, require, instruct, recommend, suggest, advise, beg, forbid*;
   e.g. *Our boss **insisted** that the new employee **should observe** our internal rules.* → *Il nostro capo ha insistito che il nuovo dipendente **debba** osservare le nostre regole interne.*
2. verbs of **permission**, e.g. *allow, permit, interdict, forbid, authorize, can't bear/stand;*
   e.g. *This commercial airline does not allow that hand luggage **should be kept** next to the passengers' seats*. → *Questa compagnia aerea commerciale non consente che il bagaglio a mano **sia tenuto** vicino ai posti dei passeggeri.*
3. verbs of **communication**, e.g. *agree, arrange, confess, declare, explain, inform, point out, persuade, remark, suggest, state*;

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e.g. *The employees were informed that they should not leave before 4 pm*. → *I dipendenti sono stati informati che non* ***debbano partire*** *prima delle 16:00.*

4. verbs expressing **likelihood** of an event on condition that it is not real occurrence, but possibility of the event that matters e.g. *doubt, think, fancy, imagine, complain, matter,* etc.
   e.g. *I doubt that they might accept our proposal.* → *Dubito che* ***possano*** *accettare la nostra proposta.*
5. by adjective clauses **with factive** (e.g. *amazing, crazy, odd, surprising*) or **non-factive** (e.g. *best, good, right, important, essential, natural, urgent, advisable*) emotive predicates which are intransitive
   e.g. *It is essential that safety measures should be observed closely.* → *È essenziale che le misure di sicurezza* ***siano*** *osservate attentamente.*
6. by transitive predicates which govern direct object clauses, e.g. *prefer, hate, want* (**non-factive**) *deplore, regret* (**factive**).
   e.g. *I would regret that he should leave before the party ends*. → *Mi dispiacerebbe che lui se ne* ***vada*** *prima che la festa finisca.*

Moreover, the instances when the English Subjunctive expresses theoretical meaning are often referred to in relation to the types of subordinate clauses in which the tenses of this mood are used:

1. in **direct object** clauses after such verbs as: *suggest, order, recommend, urge, advise, insist,* etc.
   e.g. *The doctor* ***suggested*** *that I* ***should rest*** *for a couple of days before going back to*
   work.
2. in **subject** clauses after such impersonal constructions as: **It is** *necessary/ advisable/ suggested/ recommended/ possible/ impossible/ essential/important/desirable*, etc.
   e.g. ***It is recommended*** *that all the candidates* ***should have*** *their identity cards on the examination day*.
3. in **attributive** clauses after nouns such as: *idea, reason, supposition, decision, desire, thought, proposal, demand, suggestion, possibility, necessity,* etc.
   e.g. *His* ***proposal*** *that I* ***should be*** *his personal assistant, took me by surprise*.
4. in adverbial clauses of **purpose** introduced by *that, in order that, so that, lest, for fear that,* etc.
   e.g. *My parents left earlier* ***lest*** *they* ***should miss*** *the plane for Paris*.
5. in adverbial clauses of **reason** or **cause** introduced by *because*
   e.g. *He ran away from the crime scene* ***because*** *they* ***might think*** *him guilty.* .
6. in **concessive** clauses introduced by *though, although, however, whatever, no matter*
   e.g. ***However*** *difficult this decision* ***might be****, I will never give up.*

Such approaches to the uses and meanings of the English Subjunctive may prove very useful because the specific markers of theoretical meaning are elements which most often draw the speakers' attention with respect to an appropriate verb form to be used. The same holds valid for the Italian 'congiuntivo' which is required by specific markers of hypothesis and which is associated with specific types of subordinate clauses.

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Since the Italian 'congiuntivo' expresses possibility, uncertainty, fear, willingness, wishes, personal opinion and hypothesis[9], it is logical that all the words and structures encompassing these values require the use of one of the tenses of 'congiuntivo'.

e.g. ***Credo*** *che* ***sia*** *possibile finire questo progetto entro la prossima settimana*.

(personal opinion)

Regarding the types of subordinate clauses in which the Italian 'congiuntivo' is used, Trifone and Palermo (136) state that the tenses of this mood are compulsory in certain types of subordinate clauses (clauses of purpose and adverbial clauses of manner expressing exclusion from what is stated in the main clause) and may alternate with certain tenses of the Indicative Mood in others (subject clauses, object clauses, clauses of cause, consecutive clauses, concessive clauses, conditional clauses, temporal clauses, comparative clauses and attributive clauses, among others):

"*Il congiuntivo si usa in un gran numero di proposizioni subordinate. È obbligatorio ricorrere al congiuntivo nelle proposizioni:*

- ***finali*** (*Devo sbrigarmi affinché tutto sia pronto per la festa.* → *I have to huury up so that everything* ***should be ready*** *for the party*)
- ***esclusive*** (*Ha risolto il caso senza che fossero coinvolti i giornalisti* → *He solved the case avoiding that the journalists should be involved*).

Il congiuntivo è usato, talvolta in concorrenza con l'indicativo in vari tipi di subordinate:

- ***soggetive****: Mi sembra che* ***abbiate esagerato****.* → *It seems to me that you may have overreacted.*
- ***oggetive****: Temo che* ***manchino*** *alcuni libri.* → *I am afraid that a few books might be missing.*
- ***causali****: Hanno comesso tanti errori non perché* ***fossero incapaci****, ma perché hanno lavorato controvoglia.* → *They made so many mistakes, not because they might be unable, but because they worked against their will)*
- ***consecutive****: Lo hanno preparato in modo che* ***sappia*** *reagire alla notizia.* → *They gave him the necessary support so that he* ***could react*** *to the news appropriately.)*
- ***concessive****: Sebbene* ***avessi preparato*** *tutto con cura, ci furono degli spiacevoli contrattempi.* → *Although I* ***had prepared*** *everything carefully, there were still some unpleasant delays.*
- ***condizionali****: Se* ***avessi*** *tempo, verrei a trovarti.* → *If I had time, I would come over.*
- ***temporali****: Bisogna intervenire prima che* ***sia*** *troppo tardi.* → *We have to do something about it before it* ***may*** *be too late.*
- ***comparative****: Era meno severo di quanto* ***temessi****.* → *It was less severe than I* ***feared****.*
- ***relative****: Cerco qualcuno che* ***si intenda*** *di informatica.* → *I am looking for somebody who* ***may be*** *good at informatics*. (Trifone, Palermo 136)

[9] "Il congiuntivo esprime la possibilità, l'incertezza, il dubbio, il timore, la volonta, il desiderio, l'augurio, il ringraziamento la preghiera, l'opinione personale, l'ipotesi' (Marinucci 245).

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Comparing the structures used to express theoretical meaning by means of the English Subjunctive and of the Italian 'congiuntivo', the fact may be easily noticed that the two languages under discussion share numerous types of subordinate clauses which require the use of hypothetical verb forms. However, some of the subordinate clauses referred to in Italian do not commonly have an equivalent structure in English which is semantically characterized by truth neutrality. For example, the **concessive** clause: *Sebbene **avessi preparato** tutto con cura, ci furono degli spiacevoli contrattempi* loses its hypothetical meaning in the English variant *Although I **had prepared** everything carefully, there were still some unpleasant delays*, the Past Perfect Tense being a mark of the anteriority relationship, rather than a mark of hypothesis. Similarly, the **comparative** clause in the sentence: *Era meno severo di quanto **temessi*** translated into English by *It was less severe than I feared* preserves none of the hypothetical meaning in the Italian sentence, a variant such as *It was less severe than I might fear* being possibly regarded as unnatural in English.

On the other hand, the structures which express theoretical meaning in English find a semantic equivalent in Italian rather naturally, as illustrated by the examples below:

- **direct object** clauses: e.g. *The doctor **suggested** that I **should rest** for a couple of days before going back to work.* → *Il dottore ha suggerito che io **debba** riposare un paio di giorni prima di tornare al lavoro.*
- **subject** clauses: e.g. ***It is recommended** that all the candidates **should have** their identity cards on the examination day*. → *Si consiglia che tutti i candidati **abbiano** le loro carte d'identità il giorno dell'esame.*
- **attributive** clauses e.g. *His **proposal** that I **should be** his personal assistant, took me by surprise*. → *La sua proposta che io **debba essere** il suo assistente personale, mi ha colto di sorpresa.*
- adverbial clauses of **purpose**: e.g. *My parents left earlier **lest** they **should miss** the plane for Paris*. → *I miei genitori se ne andarono prima, in modo che non **perdano** l'aereo per Parigi.*
- adverbial clauses of **reason** or **cause**: e.g. *He ran away from the crime scene **because** they **might think** him guilty.* → *È scappato dalla scena del crimine perché lo **potessero** ritenere colpevole.*
- **concessive** clauses: e.g. ***However** difficult this decision **might be**, I will never give up*. → *Per quanto difficile **possa** essere questa decisione, non mi arrenderò mai.*

Nevertheless, in some of the instances mentioned above the Italian 'congiuntivo' is only a more formal variant of the Infinitive which is preferred in informal situations. For instance, a sentence such as *Il dottore ha suggerito che io debba riposare un paio di giorni prima di tornare al lavoro* may be well avoided by speakers in informal conversations where the variant *Il dottore mi ha suggerito di riposare un paio di giorni prima di tornare al lavoro* will definitely be preferred.

Conclusions

Although the constructions analyzed in the present paper do not cover the whole range of tenses and verb forms encountered in communication, they are representative for illustrating the similar representation of hypothetical and theoretical meaning in English and Italian. The comparative-contrastive semantic approach to the hypothetical constructions analyzed supports the view that the modal/hypothetical Past Tense used in English finds its perfect equivalent in the Italian 'congiuntivo imperfetto' because both tenses are used in hypothetical constructions to express present or future unreal/imaginary actions/situations, contrary to the

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present/future reality. Similarly, the modal/hypothetical Past Perfect has a formal and semantic equivalent in the Italian 'congiuntivo trapassato' which expresses past unreal/imaginary actions/situations, contrary to the past reality.

As regards the comparative-contrastive approach to constructions in which the English Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo' are used to express theoretical meaning, the formal and semantic symmetry is preserved in most cases, even though in certain instances the two moods expressing hypothesis in English and Italian, respectively, sound more formal being, thus, avoided by speakers in everyday conversations.

Since the English Subjunctive and the Italian 'congiuntivo' are used in numerous formally symmetric hypothetical and theoretical constructions in the two languages envisaged, it becomes obvious that this formal and semantic symmetry may be used in teaching/learning hypothetical and theoretical constructions in either of these languages, irrespective of the students' native language.

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