THE REAL VS. IMAGINARY PLAY IN ENGLISH SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

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Abstract: *The paper examines the linguistic expression of the opposition real vs. imaginary in English subordinate clauses. It explores to what extent the Subjunctive is the only way of expressing imaginary/non-factuality in subordinate clauses and in which cases the Subjunctive is doubled by other morphological semantic units occurring in the main clauses. Statistically, we tend to prove why the Subjunctive is obsolete in current English: on the one hand, it does not have a specific form, on the other hand in most subordinate clauses its non-factual meaning is doubled by morphological items occurring in the main or subordinate clause.*

Keywords: *linguistic, imaginary, subjunctive mood.*

1. Modality as the Linguistic Expression of Real vs. Imaginary. The Moods.

The opposition real vs. imaginary is part of everyday life and mentalities, therefore it needs to be expressed in the field of language which is the main means for communicating ideas. Not accidentally, a linguistic instrument has been created in order to mirror this way of viewing reality, and it is called modality. When we refer to modality, we most often refer to a verbal category (the mood) and/or to a type of verb (modal auxiliary). Yet, languages are said (see Palmer 2001: 4) to have either modality or moods, that is the languages which express modality mostly through specific moods lack modal verbs as a separate category.

As far as moods are concerned, a traditional classification of moods distinguishes between realis moods (which have factual meaning) and irrealis moods (which have non-factual meaning) (Palmer 2001: 1). The realis mood in English, the Indicative, is in other words negatively marked by modality, whereas the Conditional Mood, the Subjunctive Mood and the Imperative Mood are all positively marked. The Conditional Mood expresses an action/state which is either possible or opposed to reality. The Subjunctive Mood expresses a possible action, or unreality, improbability. The Imperative Mood is used to give commands and orders or invitations and recommendations. These three moods that form the category of positively modality-marked moods can also be divided in two groups: 'main clause or independent clause moods' (the Conditional and the Imperative occur most of the times in main clauses or independent clauses) and 'subordinate clause moods' (the Subjunctive occurs mostly in subordinate clauses, as it is suggested by its denomination: „Subordinate clauses were said to be 'subjoined' to the main clause in a sentence, or to be 'subjuncts'. Hence 'subjunctive'." (Miller, 2002: 138)). So, taking into account this classification and our focus on subordinate clauses, the main concern of this paper will be the Subjunctive Mood and its usage in subordinate clauses in order to express non-factual actions.

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2. The Strange Case of the Subjunctive Mood

The Subjunctive Mood suffers from what we can call a 'ghost-like syndrome': some grammarians see it as a complex mood in its own right, while others see it as a dying verbal form or totally deny its existence. Belonging to the former category, Romanian grammarians of the English language such as Leon Levițchi in 1970 in *Limba engleză contemporană – Morfologie* and Andrei Bantaș in 1995 in *Essential English – Engleza pentru admitere* adopt a traditional, Latin-based approach to the Subjunctive, considering it as an irrealis mood of its own which is positively marked by modality because it expresses hypothetical, unreal and impossible actions – i.e. counterfactuality, tentativeness or presupposition (as opposed to the indicative which is unmarked by modality, therefore expresses factuality). Consequently, various classifications of the subjunctive have been made when entirely recognized as a mood of its own. Some of them had the meaning as the main criterion (Ioana Ștefănescu (1978) distinguished between present subjunctive – with present time reference, and past subjunctive – with past time reference, including the past and past perfect forms of it), other focus on the form (Levițchi speaks about synthetic subjunctive present – with the form of the short indefinite infinitive, synthetic subjunctive past – identical to the past indicative and the synthetic past perfect – identical to the indicative past perfect). Moreover, Andrei Bantaș divides the subjunctive in two types, synthetic and analytic. While the synthetic forms of the subjunctive are mostly identical to other moods (Infinitive or Indicative), the analytic forms are built with the help of modal auxiliaries and therefore look like a compound modal predicate.

There are also more radical (modern and up-to-date) views of the Subjunctive which state that the subjunctive is simply disappearing. Owen Thomas (1965) for example names Subjunctive only some set phrases such as "God bless America!", while Graver (1994) totally denies the existence of the subjunctive mood speaking about *should*+infinitive constructions. Randolph Quirk et al. (1992) speaks of a hypothetical past, implicitly assigning it probably to the Indicative mood. Paul Larreya (Fachinetti, 2003: 24) asserts that "the erosion of the morphological differences between the indicative and the subjunctive past tenses" is given by the fact that there was „something common to their respective meanings. Interestingly, Benveniste (1951) has shown that in several Indo-European languages the imperfective past tense forms seem to be derived from an optative. This suggests that the "modal" component of the meaning of these forms might be as fundamental as the "temporal" component"".

As far as we are concerned, we embrace the Latin-based view and consider the Sunjunctive as a mood of its own, but also adopt Bantaș's classification into: Synthetic Subjunctive comprising the three tense forms Present (identical with the short indefinite infinitive), Past (identical with Past of the Indicative, *be* has *were* for all persons) and Past Perfect (identical with Past Perfect of the Indicative); and Analytical Subjunctive (formed with the modal auxiliaries *should, may, might, could*). In the following pages, we shall analyse the variation of verbal form in different subordinate clauses (using Murar, 2011, as a main source of classification and description of clauses) and see how non-factuality is achieved through various morphological modal means. We start from the question: if the

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subjunctive is disappearing, if it does not have specific markers to be identified as a separate mood, then how is modality marked in the respective sentences?

3. The Subjunctive Doubled by Other Morphological Markers

In many cases of subordination, the Subjunctive is predicted by the presence of other morphological markers of modality which occur either in the main clause or simply introduce the respective subordinate clause, thus contributing together to the non-factual feature of the actions. This is one of the reasons why the Subjunctive is no longer felt as a separate mood of its own: other morphological parts of speech which semantically mark non-factuality are stronger markers of modality than a verbal form which can hardly be identified as a separate mood. The same case of semantic markers which rule over the morphological marker occurs in expressing the tense category of anterior past: in temporal clauses introduced by *after, before, until* the usage of the Past Perfect of the Indicative in the main or subordinate clause is optional, because the mentioned subordinators can be enough to mark anteriority.

First of all, in Subject Clauses, the idea of non-factuality is rendered mostly by the occurrence of adjectives with modal charge in the main clause which express advice, order, necessity, probability. After the adjectives expressing advice, order, necessity (such as *appropriate, advisable, compulsory, desirable, essential, fitting, imperative, important, inevitable, natural, necessary, normal, obligatory, right, recommendable, urgent, vital*) we use the Analytic Subjunctive (with the auxiliary *should*) in BrE and colloquial or familiar style or the Synthetic Subjunctive (~the short Indefinite Infinitive) in American English, in the official (juridical, political) and elevated style. E.g. *It is essential that the students (should) be in class 15 minutes before the exam starts.* With the adjectives expressing probability (*likely, possible, probable*) the Analytic Subjunctive is used, but the choice of the modal auxiliary derives from the form: *may*/*might* in the affirmative, *should* in the interrogative and negative. E.g. *It is likely that they may come in time. Is it likely that you should travel by plane this summer?* Therefore, in this case we could say that the choice of the subjunctive mood in the subject clause is dictated by the semantic features of the adjectives in the main clause (see Murar, 2011:23-27).

Secondly, in Predicative Clauses (see Murar, 2011:27-28), the only case when an irrealis mood is used depends entirely on a subordinating conjunction which introduces the clause and suggests the idea of non-factuality: *as if, as though* used after linking verbs. The subjunctive form that is used is the Synthetic past or past perfect. E.g. *The room looks/looked as if it belonged to a child. The room looks/looked as if it had not been lived in for years*.

Then, in Direct Object Clauses (see Murar, 2011:29-30), after a verb in the main clause expressing a request, order or recommendation (*agree, arrange, ask, demand, desire, insist, move=suggest, propose; order, propose, recommend, regret, require, settle, suggest*) an irrealis mood is required in order to transpose the non-factuality of the respective action. Thus, the Analytic Subjunctive (with the auxiliary *should*) is used in BrE and colloquial or familiar style, while the Synthetic Subjunctive (~the short Indefinite Infinitive) occurs more often in American English, in formal style. e.g. *Mr. Dombey proposed that they should*

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start. (Ch. Dickens); *Ivory insisted that he be present.* (A.J. Cronin); *He recommended that the article be printed.* The verb *wish* used in the main clause is another morphological element which dictates the use of an irrealis mood in the direct object clause: Past Synthetic Subjunctive to express regret or present unreality, Past Perfect Synthetic Subjunctive to express regret for an action not performed in the past, Analytic Subjunctive with the auxiliary *would* to express desire for a future action or a polite request. E.g. *I wish I were ten years younger.; I wish he hadn't gone.; I wish the rain would stop for a moment.*

In Appositive Clauses (see Murar, 2011:46-47), the nouns *recommendation, demand, request, suggestion* in the main clause require the use of the Analytic Subjunctive (with *should*) in the Appositive Clause. E.g. *His suggestion that we should go to the theatre was accepted.*, *His recommendation that the patients should take this medicine was strictly followed.*

In Adverbial Clauses of Comparison and Concession (see Murar, 2011:58), the subordinating conjunction phrase *as if* dictates the use of the Past Synthetic Subjunctive for parallel/ simultaneous actions and Past Perfect Synthetic subjunctive for anterior/ prior actions. E.g. *He talks/talked as if he were a teacher.* (but he isn't/wasn't), *He behaves /behaved as if he had been there.* (but he wasn't). Yet, the Indicative Mood can also be used in the adverbial clause of comparison and concession, to indicate factual meaning, an assumption that ranges from tentativeness to likelihood: e.g. *He acts as if he wants to tell me something. ; It looks as if it's going to rain.*

The Adverbial Clause of Affirmative Purpose (see Murar, 2011:67-68), usually contains an Analytic Subjunctive formed by means of the modal auxiliaries *will/would, can/could, may/might, shall/should*. The choice of the auxiliary depends on two factors: a) the tense of the verb in the main clause (a main verb in the present, present perfect, future – triggers the use of *will, can, may, shall* in the clause of affirmative purpose; a main verb in the past tense – triggers the use of *would, could, might, should*) b) the introductory conjunction - *so that* – may be followed by any auxiliary; *in order that* – is followed by *may, shall; that* – is normally followed by *may* e.g. *I'll send the letter airmail so that he will/can/may get it right away., He wrote the notice in several languages so that the foreign tourists could understand them.*; *I did it in order that everyone should be satisfied. The door of Scoorge's house was open that he might keep an eye upon his clerk.*

Similarly, the Adverbial Clause of Negative Purpose (see Murar, 2011:68-69) usually contains an Analytic Subjunctive formed by means of the modal auxiliaries *will/would, shall/should, may/might* or the Indicative Mood. The choice of the auxiliary depends on two factors: a) the tense of the verb in the main clause (a main verb in the present, present perfect, future – triggers the use of *will, can, may, shall* in the clause of affirmative purpose, a main verb in the past tense – triggers the use of *would, could, might, should*) b) the introductory conjunction - *for fear that* – may be followed by any auxiliary, *so that, lest, in case* – are followed by *shall/should* or The Indicative Mood (Simple Present or Past Tense).

e.g. *He hid behind some bushes for fear that passers-by should see him., He didn't turn on the light for fear that she might wake up., Put out the candles, so that they shan't see the light when I open the shutters*. (G.B. Shaw), *She dared not approach a window lest he*

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should see her from the street. (Charles Dickens), *I'll give him a list in case he forgets what to buy.*

Finally, two types of conditional clauses express unreal, improbable condition referring either to the present or future (type II) or to the past (type III). Although the main clause involves the use of the Conditional Mood, the conditional clause employs the Synthetic Subjunctive, Past, respectively Past Perfect tenses. In their case, too, the Subjunctive is not the only marker of non-factuality, it is doubled by the presence of the Conditional Mood (present or Past) in the main clause – itself a Mood of non-real actions or states, as well as by an introductory conjunction: *if, unless, suppose, supposing (that), so long as, in case.* E.g. *If you explained a little more fully, I should understand better. If I had been his brother, he could not have seemed more pleased to see me.* (J. Galsworthy). In very formal style (elevated literary style, legal or scientific contexts), the Indefinite Synthetic Subjunctive may be used in Type I conditional clauses: *If any person be found guilty, he shall have the right of appeal.*

4. The Subjunctive as the sole marker of non-factuality

There are some cases in several subordinate clauses mentioned above in which the Subjunctive becomes the only marker of non-factuality, and it is the choice of mood which makes the difference between modality-marked and modality-unmarked sentences.

Thus, in the subject clause there is one type of words which do not dictate the choice of the mood. These words express psychological reactions and include the following: verbs *alarm, amaze, irritate*, adjectives *amazing, disgraceful, gratifying, odd, strange, surprising, unthinkable,* nouns *pity, shame, surprise*. If we use an indicative verb in the subject clause, we express an actual existing state of things e.g. *It is surprising that he is resigning* (the resignation itself is an assumed fact). If the verb is in the analytic subjunctive, it stresses the subjective reaction, emotional attitude of the speaker (is used when the idea or feeling is emphasized). E.g. *It is surprising that he should resign* (the very idea of resigning is surprising).

After the verbs *propose, recommend, suggest* in the main clause there is also the possibility to choose between the Indicative and the Subjunctive in the direct object clause, but this does not mark a semantic opposition (factuality vs. non-factuality) but a difference of language register: the Indicative is preferred in the colloquial style, whilst the Subjunctive is more formal and literary. E.g. *He recommends that Mr. Smith goes. He recommends that Mr. Smith should go/go.*

In Prepositional Object Clauses, when in the main clause there are verbs expressing a psychological state (*be sorry/surprised/astonished/amazed/disappointed*) there is the same choice of Moods which marks the difference factuality vs. non-factuality. The Indicative suggests that the whole sentence is a statement of a fact (a report of a reaction or evaluation) e.g. *I am surprised that your brother objects.,* while the Analytic Subjunctive (with *should*) stresses the subjective reaction, emotional attitude of the speaker: e.g. *I am surprised that your brother should object.*, for anteriority, the Analytic Past Subjunctive is used *I was sorry she should have moved to another town.*

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In the Adverbial Clause of Concession, the Indicative Mood is used to express a real, factual situation. E.g. *I shan't go there no matter that happens.* When there is a hypothetic situation, a supposition in the concessive clause, the Subjunctive Mood. The register of language and the subordinating conjunctions now dictate which Subjunctive to use: in formal style the Indefinite Synthetic Subjunctive is used after *though, although, whatever*, while in speech or, generally speaking, in less formal style the Analytic Subjunctive with *may/might* is preferred. E.g. *However good the engine be, it wants some repairs in a few years' time.*, *Whoever may/might come show him in*. In concessive clauses introduced by *even if, even though* the Analytic Subjunctive with *should* is used no matter which language register is involved. E.g. *Even though he should find out, he won't do anything about it.*

The strongest case of marking non-factuality solely by the use of the Subjunctive is represented by the Analytic Subjunctive with *may* (sometimes *will*) in order to express concession in a clause which lacks any introductory conjunctions or adverbs. In this case the Subjunctive plays not only a semantic role of non-factuality, but also a syntactic role of marking a concessive clause. E.g. *The Smiths may live in a small house, but they are quite well off. He may have been born in England, but he doesn't speak the language well.*

Adverbial Clauses of Result overlap with those of Purpose both in meaning and in form. The chief difference is that clauses of result are factual rather than suppositional, hence they may contain an ordinary verb without a modal auxiliary. e.g. *He did his job so well that they promoted him. He did his job so well that I'll never forget him.*

5. Conclusions

The Subjunctive is seen as an irrealis mood which expresses non-factual actions only by those grammarians which still consider it a mood of its own. Its status of a dying mood derives from the fact that in many cases of usage in subordinate clauses, its non-factual hypothetical meaning is doubled by the presence of semantically marked parts of speech which are enough to mark modality. Few are the cases in which the Subjunctive is the only marker of modality in the sentence.

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