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Subjunctive Verbs

You will be able to—

1. understand how subjunctives work in English and Greek to denote potential action that "may" take place;
2. recognize and understand the four types of conditions;
3. recognize and write the subjunctive forms in the present and aorist for the active, middle, and passive voices;
4. learn the many ways the subjunctive can be used;
5. gain more practice in translating and working with Greek; and
6. master ten more high-frequency vocabulary words.

Introduction

Thus far we have studied verbs in the indicative mood. Mood, as Porter has said, "is an indication of the attitude of the speaker toward reality" (*Idioms*, 231). The indicative mood is the mood a speaker/writer will use to portray reality as they perceive it and indicative verbs express real action. One must be careful to realize the indicative does not equal reality as liars may use the indicative to misrepresent reality. There are three Greek moods of potential:

1. **Subjunctive** is the realm of the possible. "May" or "might" is often used in translation (e.g., Zach may wash the car).
2. **Imperative** indicates expected action calling for volition and often with expectation. The imperative often expresses a command (e.g., Zach, wash the car! or prohibition: Zach, don't wash the car today).
3. **Optative** indicates a hoped-for circumstance that is often a remote possibility. In Greek it is often used in prayer (e.g., Oh, that Zach would wash the car).

Aspect may be a useful way of thinking of the subjunctive. The present is used by the writer to portray an unfolding of process, immediacy foregrounding the verb. The aorist is used as a background form viewing the action as wholistic and complete.

Introduction to the Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is the mood of potential or possibility. "May" and "might" are the two key words often used in translating subjunctives. Subjunctives are easily recognized by the trigger words that usually precede them. Their form is easily learned

since the endings are the same as the present active indicative except that the connecting vowel is lengthened from omicron to omega and from epsilon to eta.

Form

The subjunctive present (action in progress or unfolding) is built from the present verb stem as follows:

λυ + ω + μεν = λύωμεν   We may continue loosing

The subjunctive aorist (whole or complete action) is built from the aorist verb stem with a sigma and the same endings as the present. There is no initial augment. Augments occur only in the indicative. Be able to chant through the present and first aorist paradigms. They should sound very familiar.

λυ + σ + ω + μεν = λύσωμεν We may loose

Present Subjunctive of λύω

Active	Singular		Plural	
	1. λύω	I may loose	λύωμεν	We may loose
	2. λύῃς	You may loose	λύητε	You may loose
	3. λύῃ	He/she may loose	λύωσι(ν)	They may loose
Middle/ Passive	**Singular**		**Plural**	
	1. λύωμαι	I may be loosed	λυώμεθα	We may be loosed
	2. λύῃ	You may be loosed	λύησθε	You may be loosed
	3. λύηται	He/she may be loosed	λύωνται	They may be loosed

First Aorist Subjunctive of λύω

Active	Singular		Plural	
	1. λύσω	I may loose	λύσωμεν	We may loose
	2. λύσῃς	You may loose	λύσητε	You may loose
	3. λύσῃ	He/she may loose	λύσωσι(ν)	They may loose

Middle	Singular		Plural	
	1. λύσωμαι	I may loose myself	λυσώμεθα	We may loose ourselves
	2. λύσῃ	You may loose yourself	λύσησθε	You may loose yourselves
	3. λύσηται	He/she may loose himself/herself	λύσωνται	They may loose themselves

Passive	Singular		Plural	
	1. λυθῶ	I may be loosed	λυθῶμεν	We may be loosed
	2. λυθῇς	You may be loosed	λυθῆτε	You may be loosed
	3. λυθῇ	He/she may be loosed	λυθῶσι(ν)	They may be loosed

Second Aorist Active Forms of λείπω (to leave, fall short) (no sigma)

Singular	Plural
1. λίπω	λίπωμεν
2. λίπῃς	λίπητε
3. λίπῃ	λίπωσι(ν)

Subjunctive of εἰμί

Singular		Plural	
1. ὦ	I may be	ὦμεν	We may be
2. ᾖς	You may be	ἦτε	You may be
3. ᾖ	He/she may be	ὦσι(ν)	They may be

Subjunctive Triggers

The subjunctive aorist looks like the future indicative, so care must be taken to distinguish the two. One way is to use subjunctive triggers, words that usually tip you off that a subjunctive will follow. These are found in dependent clauses (He went <u>so that he might try the bike</u>).

ἵνα   in order that (used most often)
ἐάν   if
ὅς ἄν   whoever
ἕως   until

Subjunctive Translation Examples

καὶ ὅτι οὐ χρείαν εἶχεν ἵνα τις μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου
And because he did not need that anyone might witness concerning man (Jn. 2:25)

ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον
That anyone believing in him might have eternal life (Jn. 3:15)

ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε.
But I say these things that you might be saved (Jn. 5:34).

Four Types of Conditionals

Conditions have two parts: the protasis (if) and the apodosis (then). The simple form is: If A then B. The protasis presents the condition, and the apodosis tells the consequence. There are about 600 conditional statements in the New Testament. Here are the basic structures but one must be careful to allow the pragmatic use in context to determine how a particular condition is being used and to what desired effect on the readers.

There are four types of conditions in Greek:
1. reality, assumed reality (for the sake of argument)
2. contrary to fact (presumed false)
3. possible (anticipation/expectation), and
4. possible but more contingent (less likely future).

One should be aware that levels of probability can better be derived from the contextual indicators than the particular conditional form structure.

First Class Condition: Assumed Reality

Form: εἰ + indicative verb (protasis) + any apodosis.
Function: Assumes the reality of the condition (protasis). Assumption may not actually be the case in reality, however—may just be assumed for the sake of argument.

E.g., εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.
But if (since) you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law [= and indeed you are so led] (Gal. 5:18).
Wallace observes only 37% of the 300 first class conditions fit with a "since" translation of the first class conditional. He highlights 36 times where it cannot possibly be "since." For example, Mat. 12:27: "if I cast out demons by

Beelzebub ...". Clearly he is assuming it to make a point and not affirming its reality (cf. 1 Cor. 15:13; Wallace, 310).

Second Class Condition: Assumed Impossibility (contrary to fact)

Form: εἰ + aorist/impf. indicative verb (protasis) + ἄν +

aorist/impf. indicative verb (apodosis)

Function: Assumes the condition is contrary to fact.

E.g., εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἄν μου ἀπεθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός.

If you had been here, my brother would not have died [= but obviously you were not here—thus denying the protasis] (Jn. 11:32).

Third Class Condition: Possibility (anticipation/expectation)

Form: ἐάν + subjunctive (protasis) + any apodosis

Function: Possibility future condition.

E.g., ἐάν τούτον ἀπολύσας, οὐκ εἶ φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος.

If you release this one, you are not a friend of Caesar [= you have not yet, but if you do, then . . .] (Jn. 19:12).

Found about 300 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it will semantically share the meaning of the first class conditions with the level of probability derived from the context.

Fourth class condition: Possibility (rare)—less likely future or more contingent

Form: εἰ + optative mood (protasis) + optative (apodosis)

E.g., ἀλλ᾽ εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε

But if you should suffer (1 Pet. 3:14) (cf. Summers, *Essentials,* 121; Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar,* 289). Again the context will dictate the level of possibility.

Various Subjunctive Functions

We have already discussed the role of the subjunctive in third class conditional statements. The subjunctive has four other major functions:

1. Hortatory subjunctive urges the speaker and listeners to a certain behavior or mind-set. This use requires the first person.
    Διέλθωμεν, καὶ ἴδωμεν.
    Let us go, and let us see (cf. Lk. 2:15).

2. Subordinate purpose or result clause is often introduced by ἵνα + subjunctive.
    ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός
    in order that he might witness concerning the light (Jn. 1:7)

3. Prohibitive subjunctive uses the aorist with a negative and prohibits an action.
   μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.
   Lead us not into temptation (Mat. 6:13).

4. Deliberative subjunctive often is a rhetorical device not calling for an answer.
   τί εἴπω ὑμῖν;
   What shall I say to you? (1 Cor. 11:22).

Negative Questions

There are two major ways to say "no" in Greek, using **οὐ** and **μή. οὐ** is used with finite verbs in the indicative. **μή** is used with the moods of potential (subjunctive, imperative, optative) and nonfinite verbal forms (participles, infinitives). Sometimes with subjunctives, a double negative **οὐ μὴ** is used for emphasis (Jn. 6:37). **οὐ** and **μή** are used in questions to elicit two quite different responses.

When a question begins with **οὐ,** the expected answer is "yes."
   You will study tonight, won't you? (implied "yes" answer)

When a question begins with **μή,** the expected answer is "no."
   You aren't going to study, are you? (implied negative answer)

One way to remember this is, "May" (**μή**) means "nay."

Translation Examples

οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος; οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἑώρακα;
Am I not an apostle? [of course I am] Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? [of course I have] (1 Cor. 9:1)

τί γάρ; εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει;
What then? If some did not believe, will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? [no way] (Rom. 3:3)

Optatives

There are only sixty-seven optatives in the New Testament. We will not learn a paradigm but you should be aware that they exist, express a "wish," and that their form is characterized by the connective **οι, αι,** or **ει.** Here are a few examples (Oh that . . .) (Hewitt, *New Testament Greek,* 193–94):

γένοιτο	aorist dep. 3sg	γίνομαι	Oh that it might be
δυναίμην	present dep. 1sg	δύναμαι	Oh that I might be able
εἴη	present active 3sg	εἰμί	Oh that he might be

ἔχοιεν	present active 3pl	ἔχω	Oh that they might have
θέλοι	present active 3sg	θέλω	Oh that he might wish
ποιήσαιεν	aorist active 3pl	ποιέω	Oh that they might make

Optative Translation Example

Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο.
What shall we say then? Is the law sin? <u>May it never be</u>! (Rom. 7:7)

Chant: #24: Subjunctive (I may loose)

λύω, -λύῃς, λύῃ, λύωμεν, λύητε, λύωσι(ν)   **Present Active Subj.**
λύωμαι, -ῃ, ηται, -ωμεθα, -ησθε, -ωνται   **Present Mid./Pass. Subj.**

**Aorist Active & Middle use the same endings as the present
Aorist Passive uses the Present Active endings**

Vocabulary

ἄγω	I lead, bring (67)
ἀπολύω	I set free (66)
εἴτε	if, whether (65)
ἐντολή, -ῆς, ἡ	commandment (68)
καρπός, -οῦ, ὁ	fruit (66)
πιστός, -ή, -όν	faithful (67)
πρεσβύτερος, -α, -ον	elder (66)
ῥῆμα, -ατος, τό	word (68)
σάββατον, -ου, τό	Sabbath (68)
φέρω	I bear, carry (66)