

SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD IN MODERN ENGLISH: COGNITIVE BASE AND PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF GRAMMAR STRUCTURES INVOKING SUPRA-REALITY IN US ELECTION DISCOURSE

Dmitry N. Novikov, Andrey S. Druzhinin
Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University)
[1dnnovikoff@mail.ru](mailto:dnnovikoff@mail.ru), [2andrey.druzhinin.89@mail.ru](mailto:andrey.druzhinin.89@mail.ru)

The paper makes a case for the cognitive analysis of English grammar constructions describing counterfactual situations. Such constructions are often referred to as the Subjunctive Mood and include (but are not limited to) sentences commonly known as Conditionals (Type 2, Type 3 etc.).

The authors' approach is premised on the ideas of prototype semantics in combination with the principles of the bio-cognitive theory of meaning, which treat language as a human being's unique ability to better adapt in the physical and socio-cultural environment owing to the experience gained and the knowledge accumulated. With that in mind, all language units, whether lexical, grammatical or any other, constitute epistemic reference points, which stem from a language speaker's cognitive work, and provide them with quite an effective tool for the adequate coordination of their own activities in time and space.

Counterfactual grammar constructions provide such a pattern of linguistic units that can help the languager offer both themselves and other members of their language community orientation in their spatial and temporal environment, with the starting point of coordination located in a reality conceived of by the languager as a sort of mental extension of the real world, or otherwise, *supra-reality*.

Hence *supra-reality* is understood as a mental image created by the human consciousness at a given moment of languaging which contradicts a person's *hic et nunc* sensual perceptions and is presented as an alternative model of reality. The image of *supra-reality* is claimed to underlie the content of meaning of all counterfactual syntactic constructions, whose categorial prototype, that is the (best) mental image of the necessary constituents of their form, is derived from collocations with *would* and with verbs in the *past simple*, and whose linguistic category comprises various combinations with such sentential variables, or rather, affordances as *if, only if, as if, as though, it's time, rather, wish*.

Pragmatically, election discourse provides a wide variety of situational affordances which trigger the actualization of supra-reality in the languager's mind. The present cognitive discourse-based analysis (a case study of D. Trump's and H. Clinton's campaign speeches) suggests that there are three functions in which supra-reality is actualized in speech, namely those of project ('It *would create* more jobs'), projection ('If the USA *got* along with Putin, it *wouldn't be* so bad') and retrospection ('My grandfather believed that his country *would have* a better life').

In contrast with traditional conceptions and other works in the related area of linguistics, the designed approach allows for a more careful consideration of the language user factor, including his/her cognitive work when turning to the constructions under analysis in their actual discourse practice. Such structures, thus, help the speaker invoke in their mind the image of alternative reality, which creates a contrast to the factual reality (counterfactuality), for the purpose of describing potential and imagined situations.