The Role of the Native Language in the Non-native Acquisition of Hypothetical Conditional Structures
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The Role of the Native Language in the Non-native Acquisition of Hypothetical Conditional Structures
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Edith Schouten

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SAMENVATTING

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CURRICULUM VITAE
Introduction

The study of second language acquisition (SLA) is a fast growing, interdisciplinary field which has evolved in the space of some 40 years into a multifaceted area of research. One central aspect of SLA which has received constant attention is the role of the mother tongue. Until the late 1960s, the acquisition of a second (or foreign) language was thought to be largely determined by the structure of a learner’s first language (L1), since ideas about language acquisition were rooted in behaviourism. Learning a second or foreign language was viewed as establishing new sets of L2 habits through practice and reinforcement. Since L1 habits were thought to interfere with the learning of L2 habits, it was assumed that differences between source and target would lead to learning difficulties. These claims are known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) (Lado 1957) and the main goal of its proponents was to identify problem areas with the aid of unified descriptions of source and target languages which would provide the basis for pedagogical materials (‘drills’) aimed at preventing and eradicating learners’ errors.

Towards the end of the 1960s, serious doubts were raised about the ability of the CAH to predict and explain learners’ errors, thanks to theoretical insights and empirical research. For instance, Dulay and Burt (e.g. Dulay & Burt 1972; 1974), heavily influenced by Chomsky (e.g. 1965) claimed that, instead of being regulated by habit formation, hindered by L1 interference, second language acquisition was a process of creative construction similar to that of child language acquisition. In their view, a large proportion of L1-like errors were in fact developmental and learners from different language backgrounds went through similar acquisitional stages. As a result of their views and the demise of behaviourism, research on the role of the learners’ mother tongue waned.

Recent years have seen a revival of the interest in the influence of the mother tongue in the language acquisition process. The role of transfer has been reassessed and the discussion whether or not transfer exists has given way to research whose aim is to gain more insight into the conditions under which transfer occurs and the way transfer interacts with other factors relevant to SLA.

For instance, this study sets out to investigate the role of the L1 in one such factor, fossilization. Teachers and researchers are often faced with the problem that the interlanguage of many learners will contain persistent errors which are difficult to eradicate despite the considerable pedagogical effort directed at them. Such pedagogically resistant forms are considered to be fossilized. The most obvious and least controversial area in which learners frequently fossilize is pronunciation, but we also find deviations which may characterise a whole population of learners in other areas, as we shall see. Fossilization is of considerable theoretical importance as it is one of the aspects of SLA which distinguishes it most clearly from first language acquisition (Bley-Vroman 1989). After all, children do not as a rule fail to become fully-fledged native speakers.
II

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One interesting case where fossilization is involved, concerns the acquisition of hypotheticals by Dutch learners of English. Despite the fact that such learners may achieve high levels of proficiency in general, they often fail to achieve native-like competence when it comes to the grammatical expression of hypotheticality.

In the following example, an advanced learner inserts *would* in the *if*-clause of a hypothetical conditional sentence, where in (standard) English a preterite is required.

*If someone would ask you: “What’s wrong with Alice?”, you would say she fell off her bike
(instead of ‘If someone asked you...’)*

This deviation from the norm is characteristic of English as spoken by native speakers of Dutch. Similarly, advanced Dutch learners of French often fail to use the *imparfait* in *si*-clauses in favour of the *conditionnel*:

*Si je saurais la réponse, je te le dirais
(instead of ‘Si je savais ...’)*

Hypothetical conditional sentences are semantically, syntactically and cognitively complex structures. They have the underlying structure *if p, (then) q*, and in English, as well as in many other languages, they consist of a subordinate adverbial clause and a main clause, its consequent. In hypothetical conditionals, speakers reason about possible or alternative worlds. For example in sentences like the following: *if John had money, he would go to Mexico/ if John had had money, he would have gone to Mexico* backshifted tense forms are used by the speaker to indicate distance from reality.

Expressing this kind of complex reasoning requires a good grasp of syntax and the semantics of the mood and tense systems and often poses considerable problems for language learners. Not only do such structures appear late in child language, they are also recognised as being among the most difficult structures to acquire in a second language (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983).

Before we can investigate to what extent and in what way the L1 may influence the fossilization process, we first need to establish the L1 facts. In principle Dutch allows any combination of a preterite and a periphrastic conditional in the main and subclause: *Als John geld had/zou hebben, ging hij naar Mexico/zou hij naar Mexico gaan* (‘If John had/would have money, he went/would go to Mexico’).

However, Dutch grammars generally have very little to say about the distribution of the various alternatives that can be used in Dutch and opinions vary as to possible meaning differences between the alternatives available:

1 Similarly, in past hypotheticals any combination of a pluperfect and a perfect conditional can be used in Dutch.
INTRODUCTION

De vormen met en zonder *zou(den)* kunnen in principe door elkaar gebruikt worden (...) Regels zijn hiervoor niet te geven (...) In het algemeen geven de *zou(den)* vormen wat nadrukkelijker de niet-werkelijkheid aan.

‘The forms with and without *zou(den)* may, in principle, be used indifferently. Rules cannot be given. In general, the *zou(den)* forms indicate non-reality somewhat more emphatically.’ (Geerts, Haeseryn, de Rooij & van den Toorn 1984: 428) (transl. E.S.)

Nieuwint (1992) claims it is the preterite, rather than the periphrastic conditional (*zouden* + inf.) which stresses the non-reality of hypotheticals: “A speaker who employs the b-variants [preterites E.S.] thereby denies the truth of the proposition expressed, whereas in the case of the a-variants [*zouden* + inf.] the matter is simply left undecided” (Nieuwint 1992: 31). These claims are hard to verify, not only because they are very largely based on subtle differences in acceptability between various alternatives as perceived by the author, but also because it is hard to ascertain the degree of (im)probability assigned by a speaker to a hypothetical situation.

It is unclear to what extent the alternatives are in free variation, which factors may influence the choice of verb form, and whether different forms have (subtly) different meanings. As a consequence, this study has a double aim:

- to provide an adequate description of hypothetical conditionals in Dutch
- to gain insight into the problems even advanced learners have with hypothetical constructions

Earlier research by Wekker, Kellerman and Hermans (1982) and Kellerman (1989) suggests that the (ab)use of *would* by Dutch learners results from a tendency to mark overtly both clauses of the conditional for hypotheticality, despite the fact that the equivalents of the correct English structures are available in their L1. The modal use of the preterite is avoided as “learners are unwilling to transfer the marked modal meanings of the Dutch past tenses to their formal English equivalents” (Kellerman 1989: 101). The suggestion that the Dutch are led by more general learner strategies rather than relying on their first language is supported by the fact that the double *would/conditionnel* construction is also found in the interlanguages of learners with language backgrounds other than Dutch (Trévisé 1979; Kellerman 1989; Peels 1989) and in the speech of children (Reilly 1982). Such cases may be seen to reflect Slobin’s operating principle which says that “underlying semantic relations should be marked overtly and clearly” (Slobin 1973: 202).

In addition to being semantically transparent, the double *would/conditionnel* construction also results in morphological symmetry between the two clauses. The tendency to use identical verb forms in both clauses of a hypothetical conditional is not unique to learner language but can also be observed in a number of other languages including non-standard varieties of English (Trudgill & Hannah 1982;
Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983; Wald 1993), French (Goosse 1993) and Spanish (Lavandera 1975; Wald 1993).

However, the fact that Dutch allows both a preterite and the morphologically transparent periphrastic conditional not only makes the acquisition problem more complex, it also means that, on the basis of the data from Wekker et al. (1982), transfer could not be ruled out because the semantics of Dutch hypotheticals were and are insufficiently clear. Our second aim, then, can be formulated more precisely: To contribute to an account of how L1, L2, learning principles and general linguistic tendencies interact.

Seeing that we are faced with a rather unsatisfactory picture of how Dutch works in this particular area of grammar, and relevant acceptability judgements and other metalinguistic comments are difficult to elicit, our investigation into the distribution of the tense forms used in Dutch hypotheticals is initially corpus-based. By examining a corpus we hoped to determine:

- to what extent the various possible structures are in free variation, or
- whether there are semantic or other constraints at work
- whether it is possible for speakers of Dutch to mark counterfactuality grammatically

The elicitation of learner data, on the other hand, includes both tightly controlled written experiments and (semi) spontaneous speech. The written experiments were felt to be indispensable as these provided sufficient numbers of hypothetical conditionals and allowed systematic variation of potentially significant factors. The tests were administered according to a cross-linguistic design whereby Dutch, Dutch-English and Dutch-French data were collected. The aim of the Dutch data was 1) to investigate to what extent the results from the test confirm those found in the corpus study and 2) to serve as a baseline which allows direct comparison between the L1 on the one hand and learner data in two typologically different L2s on the other.

In addition, interviews were conducted with advanced and highly advanced Dutch learners of English to investigate the production of hypothetical conditionals in (semi) spontaneous speech where the learners are focussed on the provision of information rather than form.

The organisation of this thesis is as follows: Chapters 1 through 3 are introductory. Chapter 1 serves to familiarize the reader with a number of issues related to conditional sentences in general and hypothetical conditionals in particular. Some attention is paid to logic, the various types of conditionals that can be distinguished and the semantics and pragmatics of the tense forms used in hypothetical structures. Chapter 2 compares and contrasts the verb forms used in English, Dutch and French hypothetical constructions, both diachronically and synchronically. Finally, an overview of the literature on the acquisition of conditional sentences is given in Chapter 3.
Chapter 4 addresses a number of problems with respect to the interpretation of hypothetical conditional sentences left unsolved in previous analyses. Taking Klein's (1994) work on tense and aspect as a starting point, the chapter provides a new and detailed theoretical account of the interplay between time frame, the temporal characteristics of the lexical content involved and the (im)probability of the world created by the conditional.

Chapter 5 deals with a study of a large Dutch corpus of hypothetical conditionals, carried out to determine how various factors influence the distribution of the backshifted verb forms in Dutch hypothetical conditionals. The corpus analysis is based on the theoretical account outlined in Chapter 4, which makes it possible to recognise different distributional patterns across the various time frames. In addition, the factors of clause order and verb morphology are investigated.

Chapter 6 will present and discuss the results from a written production experiment, designed on the basis of the results reported in Chapter 5. In this way it is possible to determine if, and in what way, the native language influences the formation of hypothetical conditional sentences of advanced Dutch learners of English and French. In addition to this tightly controlled, form-focussed experiment, interviews with (highly) advanced Dutch learners of English were carried out to investigate the formation of hypothetical structures in (semi) spontaneous speech.

Finally, Chapter 7 sums up the findings of this study and offers some suggestions for further research.
1. Conditionals

1.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to survey a number of issues connected with (hypothetical) conditionals. It is by no means exhaustive, which, given the problematic nature of the subject matter with its numerous approaches, each with their own body of literature, should come as no surprise. Instead the chapter is intended to introduce the reader to a number of philosophical, logical and linguistic aspects of conditionals in so far as they are relevant to subsequent chapters.

The term *conditional sentence* (or simply *conditional*) is usually understood to refer to those sentences that have the underlying form *if* *p*, *(then)* *q*. They consist of two parts: a subordinate clause expressing a condition and a main clause (its consequent).

(1) If I win the lottery, I'll buy a car

Exactly how the domain of conditionals should be defined and which subcategories should be distinguished has been extensively debated in the literature by philosophical logicians, psychologists and linguists. Different approaches have resulted in the use of various terms for the conditional subclause and main clause. The classical Greek terms *protasis* and *apodosis* (for *if*-clause and main clause respectively) have been used throughout the centuries while *antecedent* and *consequent* are currently used in philosophical logic. In linguistic studies, the two clauses are often simply denoted by *if-clause* and *main clause*, which terms will henceforth be used.

Conditionals have always played a central role in the field of philosophical logic, which studies their truth conditions and tries to give an account of the conditions under which *if p, q* is true or false, or acceptable or unacceptable. Conditionals have also been studied by psychologists to gain more insight into the nature of human reasoning. The aim of the linguistic tradition has mainly been to describe their semantics as well as their grammatical form. This has been done both synchronically and diachronically, both within languages and cross-linguistically.

In this introductory chapter, section 1.1. deals with the relation between the logic of conditionals as described by the theory of material implication and the way speakers (and hearers) reason with conditionals in natural language. Section 1.2. provides an overview of the different types of conditional sentences which have been distinguished in the literature. Section 1.3. is an introduction to the semantics of backshifted tense forms while section 1.4. deals with backshift to indicate distance from reality in hypothetical conditionals. Finally, in section 1.5., a number of factors are listed which may influence the order of the two clauses in conditional sentences.
1.1. Logic versus natural language

It is beyond the scope of this study to give a detailed account of the work that has been carried out on conditionals by philosophical logicians. Some aspects of logic, however, do have to be taken into account as they are inextricably bound up with the different subtypes of conditionals which have been distinguished, each with their own logical, semantic and formal characteristics.

A so-called open or real conditional like (1) above is generally considered to be the most prototypical of conditionals. It is called open because nothing is said about whether the speaker will win the lottery or not. The conditional conjunction if signals that the situations described in the subordinate clause and in the main clause are non-factual. In other words, the speaker does not assert p or -p (or q or -q). In terms of the logic of material implications, a conditional like (1) is defined in terms of the truth table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>if-clause (p)</th>
<th>main clause (q)</th>
<th>conditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) true</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) false</td>
<td>false</td>
<td>true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) false</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) true</td>
<td>false</td>
<td>false</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No causal relation between the if-clause and the main clause is presupposed in material implication. According to this table, then, the conditional in (1) as a whole will be true in the following cases: (a) the speaker will win the lottery and buy a car, (b) the speaker will not win the lottery and (s)he will not buy a car, (c) the speaker will not win the lottery but will still buy a car. The only case where the conditional as a whole is logically false is (d); the speaker will win the lottery but will not buy a car. In natural language, however, a causal or logical relation between the if-clause and the main clause is usually implied.\(^1\) The winning of the lottery will cause the speaker to buy a car and therefore it will also be implied by the speaker that if (s)he does not win, (s)he will not buy a car. In other words, possibility (c) in the truth table is normally not included by the speaker (and hearer). Instead the if in (1) gets the interpretation of a so-

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\(^1\) It has been pointed out (cf. Wierzbicka 1997; Athanasiadou & Dirven 1997) that the link between the if-clause and main clause does not have to be one of cause in a strict sense. In the following example by Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997: 66)

If I go bald, I'll shoot myself

the shooting of oneself is not directly caused by one's going bald. Instead, the relationship between the clauses would be more accurately described as one of reason (He'll shoot himself because he goes bald).

The example by Wierzbicka (1997: 20) below, however, shows that sometimes even a paraphrase with because is not possible:

If he invites me to dinner, I will not go

*I will not go because he invites me to dinner

This would be an example of what has been called a stochastic relationship (cf. Nieuwint 1992: 7), where it is entirely up to the speaker to decide what will happen in case the situation in the if-clause occurs.
called biconditional; *if and only if*: (cf. Davies 1979; Comrie 1986; Johnson-Laird 1986; van der Auwera 1997).2

However, as Stalnaker (1991) points out, a hearer faced with a statement like the following

(2)  If the Chinese enter the Vietnam conflict, the US will use nuclear weapons (Stalnaker 1991: 30)

may believe that the use of nuclear weapons by the US is inevitable and thus believe the conditional as a whole to be true irrespective of whether the Chinese enter the conflict or not. Apparently conditionals can sometimes be reasoned with according to the laws of material implication. Stalnaker provides us with a way to get round this problem of the need for a connection between the two clauses by giving the following guidelines for the evaluation of a conditional sentence:

First, add the antecedent (hypothetically) to your stock of beliefs; second, make whatever adjustments are required to maintain consistency (without modifying the hypothetical belief in the antecedent); finally consider whether or not the consequent is then true. (Stalnaker 1991: 33)

If we follow these guidelines, the example mentioned above will not be a problem for someone who believes the US will use nuclear weapons anyway, since the addition of the antecedent to his or her stock of beliefs does not require an adjustment which affects the statement in the main clause. Stalnaker then makes a transition from beliefs speakers have to truth conditions by means of the concept of possible worlds:

Consider a possible world in which A is true, and which otherwise differs minimally from the actual world. ‘If A, then B’ is true (false) just in case B is true (false) in that possible world’ (Stalnaker 1991: 33-34)

which again leaves open possibility (c) of the truth table above, where A is false but the conditional as a whole is true since B is true. It seems to be the case then that speakers in natural language can and do sometimes reason according to the truth table as defined by the logic of material implication but that more often than not a more restricted truth table is applied to conditionals in natural language as a result of pragmatic implications.

Dancygier & Sweetser (1996) propose that, instead of considering a possible world, the *if*-clause sets up a mental space. Mental spaces are different from possible worlds in that they are not global but local; only the situations (people, places etc.) put on the stage by the conditional are considered. The more restricted truth table is the result of the fact that speakers use conditionals to make predictions based on alternatives. In

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2 In many languages there are connectors which encode such a biconditional. English *unless*, for instance, is the negative counterpart of *if and only if*, which means that an example like the following Unless (that) you leave immediately, you’ll be late (Comrie 1986: 79) should be interpreted as ‘*if and only if* you do not leave immediately, you’ll be late’.
their framework, a conditional like *if it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game*, sets up two alternate mental spaces: one in which it rains and the game is cancelled and one where it does not rain and the game takes place, hence the exclusion of possibility c of the truth table (see also section 1.2. below).

1.2. Classifications

Since the term *conditional sentence* covers a wide range of sentences with a varied array of formal, temporal, logical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics, there have been many proposals for their classification into different types. In this section, the most widely recognised subtypes will be dealt with.

A characteristic of prototypical open conditionals like (1) is that the event referred to in the *if*-clause (the winning of the lottery) typically has not occurred at the moment of speaking and therefore the *if*-clause can be said to refer to the time span following the moment of speaking. It is for this reason that conditionals like (1) and (2) have been called *future predictives* (cf. Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman 1983: 342; Dancygier 1993: 406). In these conditionals a possible future event is described in the *if*-clause, which will cause the situation or event in the main clause. The main clause generally follows the *if*-clause in time. Dancygier points out that the causality and sequentiality are not part of the meaning of the conditional as such, but the result of more general pragmatic principles that also apply to, for instance, conjoined sentences as in:

(3) The road was icy and she slipped (Dancygier 1993: 413)

where the ice in the road is interpreted as causing *her* to fall (see also section 1.5. below).

Generic and habitual conditionals describe a relationship between situations or events which are not bounded in time and have the force of a physical law (4) or regularity (5), (6):

(4) If you heat ice, it melts (generic)
(5) If I played the piano, Diana sang along (habitual)
(6) If I eat bananas, I get sick (habitual)

The cause-effect relation is still implied but instead of referring to a single event or state in the future, generics and habituels are timeless (4), (6) or refer to the (extended) past as in (5). Because of this, the situation in the *if*-clause (and the main clause) is not left open. Instead, the conditional describes a relationship that is or was habitually true. In these cases *if* can be replaced by *when(ever)*.

There is another type of conditional where the speaker does not make a prediction about a possible future event (and its consequence) but instead draws conclusions on the basis of something which is contextually given. Following Dancygier (1993), I will
henceforth use the term non-predictive to refer to this type of conditional.3

(7a)  A: We want to reach Colin and all we know is he is in London
     B: If Colin is in London, he is staying at the Hilton

Davies observes that Speaker B in (7a) assumes from the previous utterance that Colin is in fact in London and that "[t]hese constructions are distinguished from open prediction conditionals mainly by the status of if, and the knowledge feature realised in the dependent clause ... induction conditionals realise accepted knowledge, and have 'closed if', related to 'as" (Davies 1979: 156-157). The utterance in (7a) could be paraphrased as (7b):

(7b)  Since/as you're telling me Colin is in London, I know he must be staying at the Hilton

Even though in this case it seems perfectly all right to replace if by since, several authors (cf Comrie 1986; Nieuwint 1992; Dancygier 1993) have noted that it is not the case that if can mean the same thing as since. Even where the content of the if-clause may be known to the speaker, he or she does not commit him/herself to the truth of p, which can be illustrated by the example below, where the speaker clearly does not know whether or not Colin is in London.

(8)    A: We want to reach Colin but we don't know where he is
       B: All I know is, if he is in London, he is staying at the Hilton
       B: *All I know is, since he is in London, he is staying at the Hilton

Tregidgo (1980) calls these types of conditions open truth conditions because the matter whether or not Colin is actually in London is left open and the if-clause can be paraphrased by adding: if it's true that... or if it's the case that.... Moreover, the situation described in the if-clause does not have to be recoverable from the directly preceding discourse. It may have been only implied, or it may otherwise be shared knowledge.4

Interestingly, Akatsuka (1985) shows that Japanese distinguishes between patterns for cases where the speaker regards the antecedent as true and cases where the antecedent expresses a condition. Although the English translations in (9b) and (10b) are identical, Japanese does not allow the conditional construction it-tara in (9b), where the speaker regards the antecedent to be true.5

3 In the literature, various other terms like conceded conditionals (Zandvoort 1972), truth conditionals (Johnson-Laird 1986; Tregidgo 1980), induction conditionals (Davies 1979) and inference conditionals (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983) have been proposed which are sometimes divided into further subtypes. The term non-predictive was opted for because of its neutrality.

4 For a good overview of the role of contextual givenness see Dancygier (1993).

5 In (10b), iku no nara (as well as several other alternatives) may also be used but not the other way around.
Another difference between future predictives like (1), and non-predictive conditionals like the ones in (7) and (8) is the range of possible tense forms in English. In contrast with the present tense in future predictives, the present tense in non-predictive conditionals does not refer to the future but to the present. Moreover, the main clause does not have to follow the if-clause in time. In fact, in non-predictive conditionals there are no restrictions on the time span that the if- and main clauses refer to, and any combination of tenses can occur:

(11) If I said that, I lied (PRET, PRET)

(12) If John was in London yesterday, Bill will soon go to London too (PRET, FUTURE) (Declerck 1991: 201)

There are no restrictions on the possible temporal relations between the two clauses since each clause encodes its own separate message. This is not only reflected in the greater freedom of choice of tense forms but also in the degree of syntactic integration of the two clauses (cf. Haegeman & Wekker 1984; van Belle 1997).

Not only are the temporal relations different, the logical relations are as well. In non-predictive conditionals, the kind of direct causal relation that we saw in the future predictive in (1) is absent. Instead the main clause is an inference, made on the basis of the assumption in the if-clause. This takes us to another important matter, raised by Sweetser (1990), concerning the differences between predictive and the non-predictive conditionals we have seen so far. Predictive conditionals belong to what she calls the content level of language. This means that the realisation of the situation in the main clause is conditional on the realisation of the situation in the if-clause. The relation between the clauses is on the level of “real world events and entities” (Sweetser 1990:

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6 For details on the syntactic differences between predictive and non-predictive conditionals, see Haegeman & Wekker (1984) and van Belle (1997).

7 This kind of reasoning can, and sometimes is made explicit by adding must or cannot as is shown by these examples by Funk:

If she did not understand, you cannot have used proper grammar

If Susie is listening at the door, she must be breathing quietly (Funk 1985: 367)
11. Example (1) could then, by way of illustration, be paraphrased as follows: *if the real world state of affairs includes my winning the lottery, then it will also include my buying a car.* In the non-predictive conditionals we have seen so far, the conditionality lies in the epistemic domain, defined by Sweetser as the world of the reasoning process, where “the conditionality is between epistemic states, rather than between propositions” (Sweetser 1990: 117). As mentioned above, the causal link between the clauses is of a different nature in the epistemic domain: knowledge (or assumption) of the truth of the premise in the *if*-clause allows the speaker (and hearer) to conclude the truth of what is expressed in the main clause. If it’s true that/ if you tell me that *p*, (then) I can conclude that *q* is also true. The fact that the inferential relation between the clauses is one layer removed from the content level (Dancygier 1993 calls the inferential relation between the clauses instances of metaphorical use) one could say that the propositional contents of *p* and *q* are more loosely connected than is the case with predictive conditionals. However, speakers (and hearers) generally assume that there is some logical connection between the *if*-clause and the main clause. Whether or not the hearer will accept the connection is a question of belief and context. Consider this example from Haiman (1978: 578):

(13) If my hen laid an egg today, the [sic] Cologne cathedral will collapse tomorrow

who goes on to write “[a] person confronted by this will attempt, perhaps against his better judgement, to devise a scenario in which antecedent and consequent are logically connected before rejecting the sentence as nonsense” (Haiman 1978: 578).

Nieuwint gives a further example to argue that a connection between *p* and *q* is, strictly speaking not part of the meaning of conditionals even in natural language. As in (13) above, there is no apparent relation of causality between the *if*-clause and the main clause in (14):

(14) If you’re the Pope, I’m the Empress of China

(Nieuwint 1992: 106)

Although this utterance could also be disposed of as nonsense, Akatsuka claims that in sentences like (14), there is a “hidden” connection, namely that “your claim is just as absurd as saying that I’m the Empress of China!” Hence the reading of ‘That’s absurd’ (Akatsuka 1986: 335).

Finally, there is a type of conditional where the connection between the clauses is at what Sweetser calls *speech act* level (Sweetser 1990): 9

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8 Naturally, the events or situations in the clauses of a (future) predictive do not refer to the real world in the restricted sense, i.e. the world as it is in the present, if only because the *if*-clause (and main clause) have future time reference, which is by definition not tangible or real; therefore relations between situations in possible (real) worlds are included in the content domain as well.

9 These kinds of conditionals have also been called *indirect* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985), *pragmatic* (Haegeman 1984) or *telling* (Davies 1979).
These examples could hardly be called conditionals at all since there is no conditional or logical connection between the two clauses. The gas station in (15), for example, is down the road whether the hearer needs petrol or not. Instead, (15) should be interpreted as if you need petrol, I hereby inform you that... The if-clauses are merely conditions on the relevance or appropriateness of the speech act in the main clause.10

So far, the types of conditional we have discussed have nearly all been exemplified by means of English conditionals introduced by if. We have seen that not all subclauses introduced by if contain a condition on the proposition in the main clause. Conversely, there are sentences which do have the meaning of a conditional but do not contain a conditional subordinator at all, as in these examples from Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985):

(18) Give me some money and (then) I'll help you escape
(19) One more word from you and I phone the police (Quirk et al. 1985: 931)

The problems of definition and classification will become even greater when we look at conditionals across different languages, if only because not all languages possess a subordinator whose only function is that of expressing conditionality. Consider this German example given by Comrie (1986):

(20) Wenn er kommt, gehe ich weg (Comrie 1986: 82)
    'If/when he comes, I'll leave'

This utterance will be considered an instance of a conditional in its interpretation if he comes, I'll leave, but not in its interpretation when he comes, I leave. The following example from Mandarin can even take on a conditional, temporal or causal interpretation:

(21) Zhāngsān hē-le jìu, wó mā tā
    Zhangsan drink wine I scold him
    'If/when/because Zhangsan drinks wine, I scold him' (Comrie 1986: 82)

This diversity of forms and meanings makes it difficult to define what exactly is (or is not) a conditional. According to Wierzbicka (1997), any attempt to define the essential semantics of conditional constructions is doomed to failure simply because the concept of if is a universal “conceptual primitive” and as such it cannot meaningfully be defined.

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10 For more detailed analyses of speech act conditionals, the reader is referred to Haegeman (1984) and Sweetser (1990)
in terms of any other concepts. Instead, the meaning of a conceptual primitive can only
be made clear with the aid of canonical sentences. In the case of conditionals,
predictives like the ones in examples (1) and (2) are the most likely candidates as they
refer to a possible future event which may or may not happen, unlike habituals, non-
predictives or speech act conditionals, whose meaning may overlap with connectors
like whenever or since and which do not express causality in the content domain. The
term open conditional will henceforth be reserved for the most prototypical
conditionals, namely future predictives like the ones in (1) and (2), unless otherwise
indicated.

1.3. Backshift: distance from reality

In section 1.2. above we have seen that many different subtypes of conditionals have
been distinguished on the basis of different criteria. One formal dichotomy which is
undiunted in the realm of conditional sentences is that between open conditionals on
the one hand and hypothetical (or unreal) conditionals on the other. Hypothetical
conditionals like (22b) and (22c) below are characterized by the use of backshifted verb
forms:

(22a) If I win the lottery, I will buy a car
(22b) If I won the lottery, I would buy a car
(22c) If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car

(22b) has a preterite (simple past) in the if-clause and would + infinitive (periphrastic
conditional) in the main clause. These do not refer to past time but instead indicate
some kind of distance from reality.12 Where a preterite is used for non-past reference,
we see in (22c) that hypothetical reference to the past is made by means of a pluperfect
in the if-clause and would + perfect infinitive (perfect conditional) in the main clause.13

Fleischman (1989: 2) describes backshift as a move “from spatial and temporal
distance to a more abstract conceptual and cognitive distance” (non-actuality/non-
reality). The use of past tenses to indicate ‘distance from reality’ is by no means
restricted to English hypothetical conditionals. Backshifted tense forms occur in many
other languages and in many other constructions. It is widespread in Indo-European and

11 It should be noted that the conditionals in (22) are all predictives as defined in the previous section.
They all share the same causal and sequential relations between the clauses on the content level. The
difference between predictives and non-predictives, then, cuts across the distinction between
hypothetical (+backshift) versus non-hypothetical (-backshift) conditionals. To make matters even
more complicated, some authors use the term hypothetical for all predictive conditionals, irrespective
of whether they contain backshifted verb forms or not.

12 Formally, the periphrastic conditional in English is the future in the past as in: A boy was born who
later would become king.

13 Formally, the perfect conditional in English is the future perfect in the past, whose non-hypothetical
use is rare. Comrie gives the following example: “John left for the front; by the time he should return,
the fields would have been burnt to stubble” (Comrie 1985: 76).
CHAPTER 1

in a number of other language families. The concept of temporal distance turns out to be a prominent metaphorical template cross-linguistically for the expression of distance along other axes, both grammatical and pragmatic (Fleischman 1989: 1). James (1982) notes that it is not clear exactly how common backshift is among the languages of the world but that if backshift occurs at all, it is most often used in the main clause of present or past hypothetical conditionals.

After hypothetical conditionals, the second most likely environment for backshift to occur is that of contrary-to-fact wishes as in English:

(23) I wish I had a car

where the past tense had indicates that the speaker in fact does not have a car: distance from present reality to the point of being contrary to fact.

Backshifted tenses are also commonly used to make utterances more polite:

(24) Would you pass me the salt, please?
(25) I was wondering if we could have a word

In the following French examples from Fleischman (1989: 9), there are three alternatives: imparfait (preterite), the conditionnel (future in the past) and even a conditionnel passé (future perfect of the past), marking increasing politeness:

(26a) Je voulais vous parler
‘I wanted to speak to you’
(26b) Je voudrais vous parler
‘I would like to speak to you’
(26c) J’aurais voulu vous parler
‘I would have wanted to speak to you’

Fleischman explains that the meaning “distance from reality” in these cases is put to use to indicate degrees of social distance “… to modulate the perceived assertiveness of a statement or speech act” (Fleischman 1989: 8).

Another instance of the use of backshift in French and in Dutch is what is usually called the conditionnel de presse because it is frequently used in journalistic discourse to describe events or developments which have not yet been confirmed. The speaker indicates he or she cannot personally vouch for the accuracy of the statement.

(27) Paul VI envisagerait [cond] de faire le tour du monde (Figaro, Jan. 11, 1966: 20) (Fleischman 1989: 30)
‘[Pope] Paul VI is allegedly contemplating making a world tour’
(28) Bij de brand zouden alle bewoners zijn omgekomen (Haeseryn, Romijn, Geerts, de Rooij & van den Toorn 1997: 1615)
‘All the residents allegedly died in the fire’

In some languages, children use the past tense to set up an imaginary world before playing make-believe games:

(29) Moi, j’"etais le gendarme, et tu me volais mon vélo (Goosse 1993: 1251)
‘Me, I was the policeman and you stole my bike’

(30) Ik was de politie en jij was de boef, oké? (Janssen 1994: 110)
‘I was the policeman and you were the gangster, okay?’

The past tenses here again indicate distance from reality. It has been observed in the French speaking part of Belgium and in Dutch, German, Spanish and Rumanian. Warnant (1966) calls it *préludique* since it is not used during the game but before the game proper starts. The past tense prepares and precedes the game, describes the conditions of the game and the distribution of the roles. In the course of the play itself (often a conversation which is an imitation of the adult world) the dialogue is in the present tense.

A related phenomenon is the occurrence of the preterite in French motherese (cf. Goosse 1993; Warnant 1966), which has been labelled *hypocoristic* (affectionate) and gives the following example of a mother talking to her child:

(31) Comme il "était" sage! Comme il "amait" bien sa maman! (Goosse 1993: 1251)
‘How sweet he was! How he loved his mommy!’

The use of the preterite here is thought to signal a certain a distance from the adult world (see Fleischman 1989: 13).

As the non-temporal functions of past tenses are so widespread, one may ask what the basic meaning of the past tense morphemes is. It has been argued that the general meaning of the past tense may be *remoteness*. Steele calls it *dissociative*: “past time is dissociated from present time. Irreals is dissociated from reality” (Steele 1975: 217) and Langacker calls it *distal* (Langacker 1978: 869). James argues that, since the environments where the past tense indicates distance from reality do not seem to form a natural class in any languages, speakers have to memorise them. The use of backshift is not regular and productive. Instead she argues that the past time meaning of past tense morphemes has been extended to include the hypothetical and that this results from the fact that the notion *past time* includes remoteness from present reality.

Dahl (1997) points out that it cannot simply be a relation of similarity between two kinds of remoteness. Cases where a simple past tense alone signals unreality are rare; instead hypotheticality is usually marked by means of a past tense in combination with something else (e.g. future + perfect auxiliaries, subjunctive, subject-verb inversion and subordinators like *if*).

After the disappearance of the past subjunctive in modern Germanic languages like English and Dutch, for example, perfect and future auxiliaries were added to the system. In German, where the past subjunctive (Konjunktiv II) is still distinctive in strong verbs, it is used in hypotheticals whereas in cases where the subjunctive is no longer distinctive, the periphrastic conditional (*würden* + infinitive is used).
Wenn ich geld hätte, würdest ich es dir sagen
‘If I had money, I would tell you’

On these grounds, then, Dahl concludes that there never was a direct extension of the use of the past tense to indicate the hypothetical. However, what he does not take into consideration is that, where the subjunctives and modal auxiliaries were (and are) used to indicate hypotheticality, it often concerns the past tense forms of these indicators. While there may never have been a direct extension of the use of the past tense in a restricted sense, i.e. the preterite indicative, one could say that the notion of pastness of tenses in a broader sense (i.e. including the past subjunctive and the past modals) did come to be used to signal hypotheticality, but that this was often in combination with other indicators of distance from reality.

1.4. Hypothetical conditionals

In section 1.1. above we saw that reasoning with conditionals requires speakers and hearers to adapt their stock of beliefs or consider a possible world or to set up alternative mental spaces on the basis of whatever is mentioned in the if-clause. The backshifted verb forms used in hypothetical conditionals then signal a greater dissociation from the world or mental space set up by the if-clause than is the case in open conditionals. The speaker explicitly indicates that he or she is talking about a hypothetical situation.

In open conditionals, the speaker’s attitude is neutral in the sense that he/she does not know whether the world set up by the if-clause is or will be distinct from the actual world, whereas his/her attitude to a hypothetical if-clause is often described as one of negative epistemic stance: the speaker dissociates him/herself from the world set up by the if-clause (cf. Fillmore 1992; Dancygier & Sweetser 1996). Fillmore calls this counterfactual or counter to expectation in case of future time reference.

This interpretation is in accordance with some of the observations made about hypothetical conditionals in the more traditional grammars, where it is assumed that open and hypothetical conditionals not only differ with respect to the degree of distance from reality but also with respect to the degree of likelihood that the speaker ascribes to the proposition in the if-clause. Hypothetical conditionals are said to be “used to refer to events about which the speaker expressed some kind of negative belief” (Palmer 1986: 189) or, as Quirk et al. (1985) put it: “[a] hypothetical condition ... conveys 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), and hence the probable or certain falsity of the proposition expressed by the matrix clause” (Quirk et al. 1985:1091). The connection between time frame, hypotheticality and counterfactuality will be dealt with extensively in Chapter 4.

The idea that hypotheticality and probability are in some way connected is also present in Comrie’s proposal for a continuum of hypotheticality, where hypotheticality refers to:
the degree of probability of realization of the situations referred to in the conditional and more especially in the protasis. I shall use the convention that ‘greater hypotheticality’ means ‘lower probability’ and lower hypotheticality means ‘greater probability’. Thus a factual sentence would represent the lowest degree of hypotheticality, while a counterfactual clause would represent the highest degree (Comrie 1986: 88-89)

According to this definition, hypothetical if-clauses contain a proposition which the speaker considers to be less likely to be fulfilled than would be the case if (s)he used an open conditional.

Dancygier (1993: 411) takes this even further. According to her, all hypothetical verb forms signal knowledge to the contrary on the part of the speaker. The following examples, however, show that this does not have to be the case.

(33) If Hitler invades England, which I admit is a million-to-one shot, Germany will/can/may win the war
(34) If Hitler invaded (was/were to invade) England, something not at all improbable, Germany would/could/might win the war (Dudman 1994: 115)
(35) If you travel at ten times the speed of light... (Nieuwint 1992: 157)

While it may be true that a speaker, by speaking hypothetically, signals that he or she abstracts or dissociates him/herself from reality, the idea that there is a simple and direct connection between a conditional being hypothetical (in the sense that it contains backshifted verb forms) and the probability that the event in the if-clause will materialise is untenable. A speaker may well use an open conditional to philosophise about a highly improbable course of events while it is equally possible to speak about something not at all unlikely using backshifted verb forms. Moreover, as Nieuwint notes, the continuum Comrie supposes cannot be a sliding scale since “[t]here is no such thing as a scale on which the real world gradually shades off into an imaginary one” (Nieuwint 1992: 157).

Hypothetical conditionals with past time reference like (22c) are often called counterfactuals because the speaker describes a situation that did not obtain, or an event that did not occur in the past (I did not win the lottery and I did not buy a car). In the case of hypothetical conditionals with past time reference, counterfactuality results from the fact that what did or did not happen in the past is fixed, whereas a speaker can refer to an infinite set of possible futures. Hypothesizing about an alternative course of events in the past generally results in a counterfactual conditional.

It has been observed, however, that counterfactuality is, strictly speaking, not part of the meaning of even the pluperfect and perfect conditional. Dudman gives the following example to illustrate this:

(36) Whether or not Hitler did invade England, if he had invaded England, Germany would/could/might have won the war (Dudman 1994: 116)
Davies also notes that speakers can hypothesize about the past without them knowing whether or not the events in the conditional actually occurred. However, this seems to be the exception which proves the rule as examples like the following are rare in natural speech:

(37) If the butler had done it, we would have found just the clues that we did in fact find (Comrie 1986: 90)

Moreover, as Comrie notes, judgements about reasonings like these seem to vary. This may well be due to the fact that past hypotheticals “even in circumstances where common knowledge cannot be assumed, [they] usually have a contrary to fact meaning” (Davies 1979: 159).

Wierzbicka shows that a counterfactual interpretation is even more strongly enforced by past hypotheticals with a negated if-clause, so that argumentation like that below is unacceptable.

(38) *If they hadn’t found that water, they would have died so let’s hope they found it (Wierzbicka 1997: 25)

In fact, she considers the double negative (if X had not happened, Y would not have happened) the core of the counterfactual category since people’s knowledge of events that have happened is more reliable than reasonings about events that have not happened. In addition, there is another construction, which, as pointed out by Fillmore (1985), can only be interpreted as counterfactual, namely if-clauses with intrusive have:

(39) If the dean had’ve opened my letter, I’d have resigned (based on Fillmore 1985: 78)

(39) does not allow the type of reasoning suggested for (36) and (37) above.16

The reason that past hypotheticals like (37) are difficult to interpret is that the hearer (reader) is initially put on the wrong track by the pluperfect in the if-clause, which would normally indicate that the butler did not do it. The hearer then has to repair the damage on the basis of deductive reasoning with the aid of the main clause. This deductive reasoning reminds one of a past non-predictive conditional like the ones in (11) and (12) above so instead of using a pluperfect, a preterite (referring to the real past) may also be used in the if-clause:

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15 It is interesting to note that the only way the if-clause in (37) would be acceptable without being counterfactual is to have the stress on the word butler. In this way the butler can be opposed to say the gardener or any other suspect. If, in contrast had is stressed, it would imply that the butler definitely did not do it since instead of on the subject, the focus is on the predicate.

16 For further comments on the use of intrusive have, the reader is referred to section 2.1.4.
We don’t know whether Mary did it or the butler did it.
If (it’s true that) the butler did it, we would (still) have found just the clues
that we did in fact find\textsuperscript{17}

This combination of a preterite referring to the real past in the \textit{if}-clause, followed by
a perfect conditional in the main clause shows that we are dealing with a special kind
of reasoning.

In the examples above we saw that, at least for some speakers, the semantics of the
pluperfect (or perfect conditional) do not necessarily include the feature \textit{counterfactual}.
Interestingly, mention is made in the literature of the fact that an extension of the use
of these tenses is taking place in English and other modern Germanic languages to
indicate counterfactuality (cf. Dahl 1997). The restriction that they can only be used in
past (counterfactual) contexts is being relaxed. In 1924, Jespersen had already noted
that pluperfect conditionals may be used “also of the present time, simply to intensify
the unreality irrespective of time” (Jespersen 1924: 266). The same view is held by
Bennett (1988):

\begin{equation}
\text{If I had had money enough (at the present moment), I would have paid you.}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
\text{If Antoinette had been here, we wouldn’t be drinking this muck (Bennett}
\text{1988: 514)}
\end{equation}

The same holds for Dutch (see section 2.2.), Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian (cf.
Leirbukt 1991; Dahl 1997).

A pluperfect can even be used with future time reference, but in order for a
counterfactual statement about the future to be made, there has to be something present
in the context which justifies it.\textsuperscript{18} Leirbukt (1991) calls this the \textit{Blockierungsfaktor}
(blocking factor). In the example below, the blocking factor in (43a) prompts the
speaker in (43b) to use a pluperfect.

\begin{equation}
\text{Seit Wochen versucht er, mich zum Verkauf eines Grundstücks zu bewegen.}
\text{Heute schreibt er, daß die Sache für ihn erledigt ist und daß er nicht noch mal}
\text{kommmt}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
\text{‘For weeks he has tried to convince me to sell him a piece of land. Today he}
\text{writes that the matter is closed as far as he is concerned and that he won’t}
\text{come again’}
\end{equation}

\begin{footnotesize}
\text{17 Bennett gives a more straightforward example of a pluperfect in a non-predictive conditional:}
While we were rolling up the tent, we were arguing about whether Charles had doused the camp
fire. I still don’t know whether he had. But if he had doused the fire, he had been very quiet
about it (Bennett 1988: 514).
The fact that this is a non-predictive conditional uttered by a speaker who does not know what actually
happened in the past (in the past) is underlined by the use of a pluperfect (had been), rather than \textit{would have been}
in the main clause. This is a slightly different and probably less controversial type of
reasoning than that in (37).

\text{18 The use of a pluperfect with future time reference may not be acceptable for all native speakers of}
English. Fillmore (1992), for one, claims it does not occur in his speech. A less controversial English
version of (43b) might be: \textit{He is not coming} -> \textit{If he had been coming}...}
\end{footnotesize}
The fact that (for some speakers at least) the pluperfect and perfect conditional are becoming markers of counterfactuality without time restrictions may be the reason why the if-clause in (37) is irreconcilable with the speculative nature of the conditional as a whole.

To conclude, we have seen that (non-)past hypothetical if-clauses neither ‘mean’ the negation of the proposition expressed, nor do they automatically include the feature highly improbable. As Nieuwint puts it: “Hypothetically, anything can be the case, and everyone is free to consider any antecedent [if-clause, ES], be it an IC [open conditionals, ES] or an SC [hypothetical conditional, ES], as (un)likely as they please” (Nieuwint 1992: 157).

As speakers in the vast majority of cases use hypothetical conditionals with past time reference to reason about what could have, would have or might have happened, but did not, the link between the pluperfect (and perfect conditional) and counterfactuality is strong. This link has led to a development where these tenses are starting to be used to indicate counterfactuality in all time frames.

1.5. Clause order

In the examples given so far, the main clause has always followed the if-clause and indeed cross-linguistically, this is the normal unmarked order. In some languages, like Chinese, it is even the only possible order (cf. Comrie 1986). As was shown in example (21) above, in a Chinese conditional there is no explicit marking and more hearer inferencing than in, say, English. Since it is a matter of juxtaposition of two clauses, this means that if the order is reversed, the inferences will be different. However, Comrie notes that this could not be the whole story, since there are languages where the main clause is marked as non-factual but where the order if-clause followed by main clause nonetheless prevails. Why should this be the case? Several factors, at least some of which possibly interact, are suggested in the literature. One possibility could be that clause order reflects the temporal reference of the clauses. As mentioned before, the temporal reference in main clause usually follows that in the if-clause. This would suggest that where the temporal relation is reversed, the order main clause-if-clause would also be reversed. Testing this, however, is difficult because conditionals with reversal of temporal relations are relatively rare. A second reason is related to the one above. It concerns the cause-effect relation between the two clauses. A cause usually precedes its effect. Unfortunately causal clauses do not necessarily precede result clauses. There is nothing unusual about (44):

\[(43b)\quad \text{Wenn er noch mal gekommen wäre, hätte ich ihn rausgeschmissen}
\]

‘If he had come again, I would have thrown him out’19

(Leirbukt 1991: 173)

19 Whether or not the announcement in (43a) is considered to be a blocking factor is, of course, entirely up to the speaker. If (s)he is not so sure, instead of (43b) (s)he could say:

Wenn er noch mal käme, würde ich ihn rausschmeissen

‘If he came again, I would throw him out’
I am late because I was held up

The last factor mentioned in the literature has to do with the function of if-clauses in discourse. Haiman claims that if-clauses are topics, and as such they “constitute the framework which has been selected for the following discourse” (Haiman 1978: 585). Topics tend to occur sentence-initially. Conditionals can be considered to be topics as they establish common ground from where the various possibilities are explored. The order of the clauses is then iconic of the way the argumentation progresses (cf. Comrie 1986: 86; Dancygier 1993: 404).

Ford & Thompson (1986) took the notion of if-clauses as topics as a starting point for investigating the function of initial and final if-clauses in actual spoken and written texts. They found that initial if-clauses function as topics in that they represent a “limitation of focus and provide an explicit background for utterances which follow” (Ford & Thompson 1986: 370). If-clauses can do so in a limited number of ways. They may make an assumption present in the preceding discourse explicit, offer an alternative to a preceding assumption, illustrate a generalization or explore options relevant to the preceding discourse. In their written corpus, Ford and Thompson found that only 23% of the if-clauses occurred finally while in their spoken corpus the figure was only 18%. They observed that those final if-clauses may still bear the above-mentioned relationships with the preceding discourse but other factors are often at work which make the shared background function less important. If-clauses may, for instance, be embedded in other clauses or follow a new, important subject which is introduced in the main clause.

Another factor Ford & Thompson mention is clause length. They found that in many cases the final if-clauses were longer than their main clauses so speakers may tend to avoid initial dependent clauses which are disproportionately long, as in (45) below:

Then it would be up to the Congress to determine whether or not they would go in the subsequent bill if the Attorney General should convince them that he was right and change the language of the bill or appropriate the five hundred and seven million dollars (Ford & Thompson 1986: 367)

There is, however, one type of conditional mentioned by Nieuwint (1992) whose statistics on clause order are dramatically different from the tendencies described above. These are conditionals where the if-clause does not function as an adverbial subclause but as a nominal clause; i.e. it functions as subject or object:

It would be nice if you could make it

In a Dutch corpus Nieuwint found that one third of the adverbial if-clauses occurred

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(44) I am late because I was held up

(45) Then it would be up to the Congress to determine whether or not they would go in the subsequent bill if the Attorney General should convince them that he was right and change the language of the bill or appropriate the five hundred and seven million dollars (Ford & Thompson 1986: 367)

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(46) It would be nice if you could make it

In a Dutch corpus Nieuwint found that one third of the adverbial if-clauses occurred

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Sweetser (1990) points out that if-clauses are often not topics in the sense that they contain given information (although they can be in non-predictives); “they are given only relative to the main clause” (Sweetser 1990: 126).
finally, as against two thirds of the nominal if-clauses. As we have seen, the event in ordinary, adverbial if-clauses often precedes that in the main clause in time. Nominals, on the other hand, are “evaluative in character” (Nieuwint 1992: 8), which means that time reference in the two clauses coincides. He hastens to add, however, that nominal if-clauses may also tend to occur finally as a result of the more general tendency of subject and object clauses to follow their main clauses.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter a number of logical, semantic, pragmatic and formal aspects of conditional sentences were discussed, which serve as a background for the chapters to follow. First we saw that there are differences between the way in which conditionals are dealt with in philosophical logic and the way in which speakers reason with them. Speakers usually interpret if as only if and presuppose a causal or otherwise logical connection between the two clauses. This connection can hold at different levels. In the most prototypical case, a possible future event or situation is described in the if-clause which will cause the situation described in the main clause If I win the lottery, I will buy a car. These future predictives are characterized by causality and sequentiality on the content level. The conditional can be said to set up an alternative world which is different from the real world with respect to whatever is mentioned in the if-clause and draw a conclusion about that world in the main clause.

There are, however, conditional sentences which are non-predictive in the sense that they do not make a prediction about a possible future (event) and its consequence but instead the connection between the two clauses here can be said to be on the epistemic level; they are used by the speaker to draw a conclusion on the basis of something which is contextually given (‘If, as you say, Colin is in London, he is staying at the Hilton’).

Finally there are if-clauses which are merely a condition on the relevance of the speech act in the main clause (If you need petrol, there is a gas station down the road).

In many languages it is possible for speakers to explicitly indicate that they are abstracting from reality by using backshifted verb forms to create non-past and past hypothetical conditionals. Although in the literature a direct connection between hypotheticality and (im)probability is often presupposed, we have seen that the use of open (i.e. non-hypothetical) conditionals is by no means restricted to conditions whose if-clauses are likely or probable. Conversely, while it is true that non-past hypotheticals are often interpreted as being contrary to fact (or counterfactual), reasoning with them is not restricted to situations or events which are highly improbable. Past hypotheticals do generally get a counterfactual interpretation, although we have seen that for some speakers the counterfactuality signalled by past hypothetical verb forms can be overruled in certain contexts. For many speakers the semantics of past hypothetical verb forms definitely does include the feature + contrary to fact and in some European languages there is a growing tendency to use these forms to signal counterfactuality irrespective of time reference.
In the last section we have looked at possible reasons why the *if*-clause generally precedes the main clause in conditional constructions. One reason why speakers may avoid preposing main clauses could be that the main clause in many languages is not marked as being non-factual (whereas a connector like *if* itself of course does mark the conditional clause as non-factual). In Chinese, where neither of the clauses are marked, the conditional clause has to precede the main clause.

The order of the clauses may also reflect the temporal and causal order of the situations described in the *if*- and main clause and since *if*-clauses function like topics, the order of the clauses may in addition be iconic for the way discourse progresses. Ford & Thompson (1986) found that where the 'normal' order was reversed, this could be due to level of embedding and/or length of the *if*-clause.

Finally, there is the class of nominal conditionals which is rarely mentioned in the literature but which is nonetheless interesting in that the normal order is for the conditional clause to follow the main clause. The *if*-clause functions as subject or object of the main clause and usually contains a comment on the desirability of the situation in the main clause.

On the basis of the issues raised in this chapter, the following chapters will enter at length into the acquisition and use of tense forms in conditionals in specific languages and the effect of factors like conditional type (e.g. predictive versus non-predictive, open versus hypothetical), time reference and the order of the clauses.
2. Hypothetical constructions in English, Dutch and French

2.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that in many languages backshifted verb forms are used in a range of hypothetical constructions, including conditional sentences. In this chapter we will look in more detail at the use of these backshifted tense forms in the languages which will be focussed on in the remainder of this work, namely English (section 2.1.), Dutch (section 2.2.) and French (section 2.3.). For each language, the historical development of the verb forms used in hypothetical constructions is described in broad outline first, after which the current use of these verb forms will be discussed. Finally, section 2.4. offers an overview of the differences and similarities between the three languages with respect to the formation and use of backshifted tense forms in hypothetical constructions.

2.1. English conditionals

2.1.1. History

In Old English (until 1100), both non-past and past hypothetical conditionals were marked by means of a past subjunctive, which had originated from the past optative of early Germanic. During the Middle English period (1100-1450), this past subjunctive gradually disappeared as a result of the “decreasing distinctiveness of its phonological forms, which in turn results from the levelling of unstressed final syllables” (Visser 1973: 762). Today only one formally distinct past subjunctive form, were, survives as a marker of hypotheticality in, for example, wishes and conditionals:

(1a) I wish you were here
(1b) If I were you... \(^{1}\)

As in the other modern Germanic languages, modal and perfect auxiliaries were added as indicators of hypotheticality in English. While the preterite (which had become indistinguishable from the subjunctive) kept being used in if-clauses, would became the modal which pre-eminently indicates hypotheticality in main clauses in modern English. Formally it is the past tense form of will, originally denoting volition and it was used as such in Old English:

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\(^{1}\) Nowadays, often was is used instead of were especially in the third person (see Leech 1971; Visser 1973).
(2) ðonne sweorda gelac sunu Healfdenes efnan wolde
‘when the son of Healfdene wanted to practice sword-play’ (Bybee 1995: 505)

By the Middle English period these past modals started to be used with present time reference.2 Bybee gives the following example from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:

(3) ‘Wher is,’ he sayd, ‘The gouernour of this gyng? Gladly I wolde se that segg in syzt and with hymself speke raysoun’ (Bybee 1995: 505)

‘Where is’, he said, ‘The lord of this company? I would gladly see that knight and have a reasonable conversation with him’

By the Early Modern English period (1450-1700) this use of *would* had all but replaced its real past meaning.3 The same goes for the other past modals (*could, might, should*), which also took on a present hypothetical meaning.

In addition to the past modals, however, the preterite was also frequently used in main clauses, even after the disappearance of the subjunctive.

(4) Had ic an swerd, ic sluȝe ðe c1250 (Visser 1973: 763)

Had I a sword, I *hit [PRET] you
‘If I had a sword, I would hit you’

(5) Then Caddy told us that she was going to be married in a month; and that if Ada and I would be her bridesmaids she *was* the happiest girl in the world. (Dickens 1853: 292)

According to Visser, however, this hypothetical use of the preterite in main clauses was already very limited by the nineteenth century. Nowadays, a hypothetical main clause containing a preterite occurs only sporadically, as in the following examples from BBC sports commentaries:

(6a) If that had gone in, we *had* them on the rack (soccer)
(6b) Probably he *was* pretty dead if that had hit (cricket)
(6c) Had that been a googly, he *was gone*4 (cricket)

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2 Bybee (1995) offers the following explanation for the fact that past tense modals came to be used in the (hypothetical) present. In a sentence like

*I wanted to go there*

it is not clear whether the speaker actually went or not. It leaves open whether or not all the conditions on the completion of the main event (going there) were or are met and the modality may still be in effect up to and including the present. In other words, Bybee claims that it is not past with future which created the use of *would* in conditionals and other hypothetical environments but volitional modality with past time.

3 Although *would* is still used to mark hypothetical willingness in sentences like:

*I would be grateful if you would do that for me*

See also section 2.1.3.

4 I would like to thank Eric Kellerman for providing me with these examples.
In the same way a pluperfect could be used in both clauses and these past hypotheticals without *would* survived into the nineteenth century, when they were only used in literary discourse (cf. Visser 1973: 2216).

(7a) This *had been* a fine time for purchase, if you had ventured (1613, Ben Jonson) (Visser 1973: 2216)
(7b) It *had been* no surprise to him, if she had fallen dead at his feet (c.1900, M. Pemberton, Doctor Xavier) (Visser 1973: 2217)

Below we will see that the use of the preterite and pluperfect in modern English is restricted to (conditional) subclauses, while *would* (*have*) is used in main clauses.

2.1.2. English hypothetical constructions
In English predictive conditionals, the following tense patterns can typically be observed:

(8a) If I *win* the lottery, I *will buy* a car open
(8b) If I *won* the lottery, I *would buy* a car hypothetical (non-past)
(8c) If I *had won* the lottery, I *would have bought* a car hypothetical (past)

The *if*-clauses contain a present tense, a preterite and a pluperfect respectively, and the main clauses contain *will* + inf., *would* + inf. (periphrastic conditional) and *would have* + past participle (perfect conditional). What is striking about these patterns is the absence of *will* (*would* and *would have*) in the *if*-clause. Dancygier (1993) attributes this to what she calls *if*-backshift. The *if*-clauses do not contain the modal of prediction *will*, since they merely contain an assumption on the basis of which the prediction in the main clause is made. Similar observations have been made by Nieuwint (1992) and Tynan & Delgado Lavin (1997), who point out that, contrary to what has often been claimed in the literature, the present tense in open conditionals does not denote the future. A clause like *If Peter comes*.. does not in itself refer to either present or future although a speaker may have a possible future in mind. Instead temporal reference is determined by other elements in the context, like *will* + inf. in the main clause, temporal adverbials etc.

It should be noted that in open conditionals, the *if*-clause may contain the modal *can*, while in the main clause the modals *can, may, must, shall* or the periphrastic future *be going to* can occur. In hypothetical *if*-clauses the backshifted modals *could* (*have*) and *should* (see below) may be used, as well as the subjunctive form *were to*.

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5 Apart from a simple present tense, a present perfect or present progressive may of course also be used:
   If, by the end of next year, he still *hasn’t found* a job, he will go to Australia.

6 A much wider range of tenses can be used in (open) non-predictive conditionals like the following:
   If (it’s true that) it is raining, my car is getting wet.
   If (it’s true that) he left this morning, he will be here tonight.
   If (it’s true that) he was here this morning, he must have seen her.

The present tenses refer to the present and the past tenses refer to the past. Any combination of tense forms can occur (see also Chapter 1).
Hypothetical main clauses allow *could (have) and might (have) to make the prediction more tentative or *should (have) as a deontic modal.

*Should and were to* can in addition be used in the conditional subclause, which can then be marked by subject-verb inversion:

(9a) If he were to do that/Were he to do that, I would fire him
(9b) If she *should* change her mind/Should she change her mind, then we *will have* to appoint someone else

The use of *should* in the *if*-clause of a conditional sentence is often mentioned in grammar books as an alternative to the present tense, i.e. it can be used in the *if*-clause of open conditionals. *Should* and *were to* are often said to make an open condition slightly more tentative and/or formal (cf. Leech 1971: 111; Quirk & Greenbaum 1973: 55; Hyams & Wekker 1984: 303). Sometimes, however, *should* is mentioned as an option in the *if*-clause of hypothetical conditionals, thus serving as an alternative to the simple past. Quirk et al. (1972) give the following example:

(10) If a serious crisis *should* arise, the public would have to be informed of its full implications (Quirk et al. 1972: 748)

Nieuwint has noted this inconsistency in the works of Quirk et al. and concludes that *if*-clauses containing *should* ought to be classed as open conditionals as *should* is excluded in hypothetical conditionals which are counterfactual:

(11a) If I *were* a mouse...
(11b) *Should I be* a mouse...
(12a) If he *had done* that, they would have fired him
(12b) *Should he have done* that, they would have fired him

Nieuwint argues that sentences like (10), where *should* is followed by a main clause containing *would* + infinitive are shifts from an open condition to a hypothetical main clause, which may sound acceptable but are nonetheless ungrammatical.  

In past hypothetical conditionals subject-verb inversion may also replace *if* as a marker of conditionality:

(13) *Had* I known, I would have told you

Apart from hypothetical conditionals with *if*, there are several other constructions where a preterite or pluperfect is used to indicate hypotheticality, for example:

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7 Shifts from open to hypothetical conditionals (and vice versa) in actual language use will be dealt with in Chapters 5 and 6
8 For an extensive account on the limitations on the use of *should* in *if*-clauses see Nieuwint 1992, Chapter 4.
(14a) Suppose/imagine he came tomorrow instead of Wednesday, then...
(14b) He looked as if he had seen a ghost
(14c) It's time we went

In wishes, the pluperfect, the preterite and would + infinitive can be used, depending on whether a past, present or future tense is backshifted:

(15a) He came to see me -> I wish he had come to see me
(15b) I have money -> I wish I had money
(15c) It will start raining -> I wish it would rain start raining

2.1.3. Will and would in non-past if-clauses
We have seen that as a rule, non-past hypothetical if-clauses in English contain a past tense. We have also seen that in addition to this, the if-clause may contain the auxiliaries should and could but not would. Both traditional grammars of English and prescriptive grammars for learners of English usually state the rule that whenever would does appear in an if-clause, it has its original meaning of volition. For instance, Aarts & Wekker state that: “In these cases [hypothetical conditionals E.S.] would cannot be used in the subordinate clause, unless it clearly expresses volition.” (Aarts & Wekker 1993: 194).

In the literature, a great deal of attention has been paid to the fact that English grammar allows would (and will) in certain if-clauses where it does not denote volition or politeness: 9

(16a) If the lava will come down as far as this, we must evacuate all these houses at once
(16b) If ten pills would kill an elephant, I suppose five will do for me

Various explanations have been offered for this phenomenon, based on certain characteristics these kinds of conditionals appear to have. For instance, Comrie (1982) points out that in conditionals like (16a) above, the event in the main clause can precede that in the if-clause, which is inconsistent with what we normally see in open conditionals. The evacuation in (16a) should be carried out before the lava will come down as far as this. In addition, the if-clause often contains a proposition which is already available as a topic in the preceding discourse i.e it echoes a construction with will (or would) previously used. However, this is not always the case. Close (1980) quite rightly argues that a conditional like (16a) is perfectly grammatical in isolation. Instead, Close proposes that if-clauses containing will express what he calls presumed predictability. This means that as opposed to a normal future predictive (if X happens, Y will happen), they have the following semantic structure: if X is predictable, then the

9 Another use that is often mentioned is that of would in combination with if only (If he would only work a little harder!)
Here the speaker expresses regret about a certain situation. This has been called optative would and it is not necessarily volitional as a sentence like If only the rain would stop! clearly demonstrates.
consequence is so and so.

Nieuwint (1992) agrees with Close that whether or not will and would are allowed depends on the type of condition to be fulfilled. In if-clauses containing non-volitional will/would, the condition to be fulfilled is not the occurrence of an event which may or may not take place but a statement about the future which may or may not be true. He illustrates this by means of the following two examples:

(17a) If I die, some people are going to ask nasty questions
(17b) If I'll die anyway, I might as well have another beer (Nieuwint 1992: 69)

In the first example, the condition to be fulfilled is I die, which can only be fulfilled after the moment of speaking, and in the second example, the condition to be fulfilled is I will die, which is fulfilled now. The only difference between non-volitional will and would then is, that the use of would indicates that it is the hypothetical prediction of an event which may or may not be true:10

(18a) If (it's true that) ten pills would kill an elephant, I suppose five will do for me

All these factors - the different temporal and logical relations between the clauses, the fact that they are often echoes of what is present in the preceding context and the fact that they are statements about the future which may or may not be true, indicate that what we are dealing with here is a type of conditional which we have come across before in section 1.2., namely non-predictive conditionals. There we saw that in this type of conditionals all kinds of tense combinations can occur and now we have seen such combinations include would (and will) in the if-clause. It should be pointed out, however, that would is not an alternative to the past tense in these cases. As they are non-predictive conditionals, a past tense would be interpreted as a referring to the real past:

(18b) *If (it's true that) ten pills killed an elephant, I suppose five will do for me

So in addition to volitional will/would English grammar also allows (or even requires) the use of these modals in certain non-predictive conditionals.

Finally it needs to be noted that there is a growing group of exceptions, which can not be accounted for in terms of the two types mentioned above. Particularly in American English, would + infinitive can sometimes be heard instead of the preterite English grammar prescribes. Mention of this is made in, for example The Grammar Book, which contains the following footnote:

In colloquial American English, such an if-clause [i.e. a hypothetical if-clause] sometimes contains would:

10 One could even make a hypothetical prediction of the completion of an event:
    If John would have succeeded (if he had tried) you must have a try at once
If Joe would have the time, he would go to Mexico

This results in a double ‘would’ construction, which many prescriptive usage manuals rule out as unacceptable in formal English (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983: 344).

Clearly, the development of tense forms used in hypotheticals has not been at a standstill since the subjunctive disappeared from English and it seems to be the case that, for certain groups of speakers, would + infinitive has become available as a marker of hypotheticality in if-clauses.

Apart from unambiguously marking an if-clause as being hypothetical, this use of would also results in morphological symmetry between the two clauses. This tendency towards morphological symmetry is not unique for modern English but has also been observed in various historical and sociolinguistic studies of French (see section 2.3.2. below), Spanish (Lavandera 1975) and Italian (Vincent & Bentley 1995).

2.1.4. Would in past if-clauses

As mentioned above, non-volitional would is sometimes used in hypothetical if-clauses. This is not only the case in non-past contexts but also in past contexts, where it is even more widespread. However, the situation in past hypotheticals is somewhat more complicated since in spoken language, contracted forms are often used:

(19) If he 'd 've come, I 'd 've run away

Here it is not immediately obvious whether the underlying construction is had have come (e.g. Visser 1973; Fillmore 1985,1992) or would have come (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985; Peels 1989; Wald 1993). Some leave it undecided (e.g. Haegeman & Wekker 1984; Comrie 1986). Peels gives two reasons why 'd have should be interpreted as would have. Firstly, would have is a possible combination in English whereas had have is not, and secondly, if we assume that 'd have is a contracted form of would have, we see that there is structural symmetry between the two clauses (Peels 1989: 23).

Fillmore (1985) calls the 'd've construction redundant have and suggests it first appeared in past hypotheticals with fronted had as in the following 15th century example:

(20) Had not he have be, we shold never have retorned (Fillmore 1985: 76)

and was the source of the “Americanism If she would have come (...) [which] is a reconstruction (or disabbreviation) of contracted had have” (Fillmore 1985: 85). Trudgill & Hannah (1982) claim it is relatively recent in American English and mainly used in spoken language.

Although this 'd've construction seems to be particularly widespread in American English, Kellerman notes that it “is occasionally detected in adult British speakers”:```
(21) ‘I would have been much more happier if he wouldn’t have head-butted me’ (professional boxer, BBC Radio 4) (Kellerman 1989: 107)

In order to determine how widespread the use of would in if-clauses is in contemporary British English, an investigation was made of the British National Corpus (BNC).

2.1.5. The British National Corpus
2.1.5.1. Non-past time frames
The British National Corpus (BNC) was used in order to find out how often and in what kinds of if-clauses would + infinitive occurs in spoken British English. The BNC contains 10 million spoken words drawn from all regions, social classes and age groups (with the exclusion of child language) and is a mixture of recordings of spontaneous conversations (4 million words) and what is called context governed speech, i.e. lectures, business meetings, political meetings etc. 53 instances of would in non-past hypothetical if-clauses were found.\(^{11}\) As was expected on the basis of the rules in English grammars cited in section 2.1.3., in the majority of cases (43) would was volitional and was used to make a polite request or suggestion as in:

(22) If all the other movers and seconders and the CEC speaker would all come down to the front it would help us enormously with time. Yorkshire Region to move, is it? Okay, all right. (BNC, trade union annual congress 1993)

Although would here could be replaced by be willing to, this is by no means always the case, such as where it is used in combination with like to or care to or wish.

(23) It’ll be lovely, it’s tomorrow, seven thirty at the Festival Hall, Kirkby in Ashfield, all the proceeds are to local charities and the admission is two pounds fifty and that included refreshments. If you would like two tickets call us now. (BNC, Radio Nottingham)

Despite the amount of attention they have received in the literature, non-predictive conditionals (like (24) below) containing would are relatively rare, with only 6 instances found.

(24) - Do you actually need three bedrooms or if a a two bedroomed cottage came up with perhaps an extra room downstairs or something would that be okay?
- erm yes it should be okay perhaps you know if obviously if one bedroom a box room wouldn’t be any good to us but that would be consider that yep it’s just that some of the cottages tend to be a bit smaller so that it might well be that we can get you something where there’s a perhaps ground floor extension

\(^{11}\) It should be noted that the corpus was only searched for the subordinator if, so hypotheticals with other subordinators were not included. Moreover, it became apparent during the various searches that it was impossible to isolate exactly those cases we are interested in. Many utterances were mistakenly listed as hits so it is possible that some cases of if would have slipped through the net.
or whatever, okay (BNC, estate agency interview)

Interestingly, the use of *would* in *if*-clauses where it is not allowed by prescriptive grammars (i.e. where it is not volitional or part of a non-predictive conditional) seems to be very limited in British English. Only 4 instances were found of this ungrammatical *would*, which according to the literature sometimes occurs in American English.\(^\text{12}\) An example is given below.

(25) Your offer of employment was accepted on the terms of the contract agreed that *if* my figures attained *would reach* your targets I could earn twenty five thousand per annum minimum (BNC, job interview)

From these data we can conclude that the exceptions described in the literature can indeed be found in natural language but that the number of non-predictive *if*-clauses containing *would* is very small. Similarly, the category of exceptions which goes against the rules of prescriptive English grammars does not occur very frequently. Below we shall see that the situation is quite different if we look at past hypothetical conditionals.

### 2.1.5.2. Past time frames

In section 2.1.4. we saw that there is disagreement in the literature as to which verb (*would* or *have*) is contracted in substandard *if*-clauses like the following.

(26a) *If we’d have put* in a price based on AC scaled fees, we would have overspent by a hundred and fifty five per cent (BNC, British Rail quality assurance seminar)

The example above is only 1 of 142 instances that were found in the BNC where the contracted form (*if ’d have*) was used. It is no surprise that no agreement is reached in the literature since both *would have* (26b) and the double pluperfect (*had have*) (26c) were each found 15 times.

(26b) Well I knew then it was gonna finish off, you know. *If more would have gone* back, then the strike would have come to an end quicker (BNC, interview for history project)

(26c) There is no need to come in and in fact *if anybody had’ve done*, they’d have been told to get out. (BNC, High court of justice hearing)

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\(^\text{12}\) In addition there were 6 cases where *would* occurred and the speaker decided to shift to another modal in the middle of the *if*-clause:

Erm, on the other hand *if* you s in some situations er I I your anger *would, would, could* make you acutely aware of something, more acutely aware than the other. (BNC, pre-retirement course)
It seems to be the case that in modern British English the construction *if 'd (ha)ve* is indeed used regularly and that for some speakers the underlying construction contains *would* in the *if*-clause (which results in morphological symmetry) while for others, the element *'d* is the contracted form of intrusive *have*.

2.2. Dutch conditionals

2.2.1. History
Like English, Dutch also used to have a past subjunctive in hypotheticals. This form had already largely disappeared during the Middle Dutch period. Only the first and third person singular of strong verbs still had distinctive past subjunctive forms (Van Kerckvoorde 1993:186) but by the seventeenth century these too disappeared and were used in literary language only (Le Roux & le Roux 1967). By the beginning of this century only *hadde* and *ware* (past subjunctive of ‘to have’ and ‘to be’) had survived.13

During the Middle Dutch period, the modal auxiliaries (particularly the *would* equivalent *souden*) and perfect auxiliaries were already being used in hypothetical constructions. *Souden* is the past tense form of *sullen*, which was originally a deontic verb ‘have to’ but, like English *will*, it came to be used as a future tense. The following Middle Dutch examples (1250-1550) show that *souden* and the preterite (or past subjunctive, where it was still distinctive) alternate in both the hypothetical *if*-clause and the main clause. In hypothetical conditionals with past time reference, the pluperfect was favoured (28a), although the perfect conditional could also be used (28b)

(27a) *Haddic een sweet, ic sloghe di mere* (Stoett 1977: 234)14

Had I a sword, I hit (PRET) you more
‘If I had a sword, I would hit you more’

(27b) *Wat sout costen, die sulk een were vulbrijngen wilde* What would it cost who such a work accomplish wanted (Stoett 1977: 39)
‘How much would it cost if one wanted to accomplish something like that’

(27c) *Ic waende ju helpen ende ghi met mi sout bliven* I thought you help if you with me would stay (Stoett 1977: 218)
‘I thought I’d help you, if you stayed with me’

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13 Today *ware* is only used in the fixed expressions *ware het niet dat... and als het ware* (lit. were it not that: ‘if it wasn’t for the fact that...’ and ‘if it were’).
14 This is in fact a Middle Dutch version of the same passage from the Old Testament that was quoted in (4).
Hypothetical Constructions in English, Dutch and French

(28a) Hadde dit een waer prophete gewesen, mine hant
Hadde dit een waer prophete gewesen, mine hant
ware worden lam (Stoett 1977: 234)
were become numb
‘If this had been a true prophet, my hand would have become numb’

(28b) Robrecht die dat conincrike soude hebben verworven,
Robrecht die dat conincrike soude hebben verworven,
hadde die coninc sonder oer ghestorven (Stoett 1977:196)
had the king without heir died
‘Robrecht, who would have acquired the kingdom, if the king had died without an heir’

The historical development we see in Dutch runs parallel to that in English: gradual loss of the subjunctive and the introduction of a past modal auxiliary to indicate hypotheticality. As in English, the preterite and pluperfect kept being used in both if-clauses and main clauses even though they were no longer recognizable as subjunctives. Contrary to what we saw in English, however, this is still the case in modern Dutch.

2.2.2. Dutch hypothetical constructions

Unlike English, Dutch usually has a present tense in both clauses of open conditionals.

(29) Als ik de loterij win koop ik een auto
If I the lottery win, buy I a car
‘If I win the lottery, I will buy a car’

In Dutch too, hypothetical conditionals can be formed by means of backshifted verb forms. In non-past time frames, these contain a preterite and/or a periphrastic conditional, a form of zou(den) + infinitive, which, like English would, is formally a future in the past. Unlike English, any of the four theoretically possible combinations of these backshifted forms may be used in Dutch:

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15 Although Dutch has what has often been called an auxiliary of future tense, zullen, reference to future time is usually made by simply using the present tense or the periphrastic future gaan (‘be going to’). Zullen is a cognate of English shall and like shall it too used to be a modal denoting obligation. Today it is used both as a temporal and a modal auxiliary (obligation and epistemic modality) and its status as an auxiliary of future tense has been subject to much discussion (cf. Kirsner 1969; van Campenhout 1974; Stenbergen 1974; Wekker 1974; Janssen 1994).

16 As in English, all kinds of tenses can be used in truth conditions in Dutch too:

Als hij in Parijs was, moet hij de Eiffeltoren hebben gezien
‘If (it is true that) he was in Paris, he must have seen the Eiffel tower’
(30a) Als ik rijk zou zijn, zou ik een auto kopen
    *'If I would be rich, I would buy a car'
(30b) Als ik rijk was, zou ik een auto kopen
    'If I was rich, I would buy a car'
(30c) Als ik rijk was, kocht ik een auto
    *'If I was rich, I bought a car'
(30d) Als ik rijk zou zijn, kocht ik een auto
    *'If I would be rich, I bought a car'

For the sake of clarity, the English glosses will reflect the different verb forms that are possible in Dutch i.e. they will contain would wherever Dutch has zou(den) and a preterite whenever Dutch has one, even though English only allows a preterite in the conditional clause and would + inf. in the main clause. It needs to be added here that options (30c) and (30d), i.e. those hypotheticals with a preterite in the main clause are rare. An overview of the distribution these tense forms is given in Chapter 5. Hypothetical conditionals with past time reference again allow four possible structures (any combination of a pluperfect and a perfect conditional):

(31a) Als hij dat zou hebben gedaan, zou ik hem hebben weggestuurd
    *'If he would have done that, I would have sent him away'
(31b) Als hij dat had gedaan, zou ik hem hebben weggestuurd
    'If he had done that, I would have sent him away'
(31c) Als hij dat had gedaan, had ik hem weggestuurd
    *'If he had done that, I had sent him away'
(31d) Als hij dat zou hebben gedaan, had ik hem weggestuurd
    *'If he would have done that, I had sent him away'\(^17\)

As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the temporal restrictions on the use of the pluperfect and perfect conditional are being relaxed in Dutch. In Chapter 6 we will see that past hypothetical constructions are frequently used in non-past counterfactual conditionals.

In the above examples, all conditional clauses are introduced by als ('if') and this is by far the most common conditional subordinator. Like German wenn it can be used

\(^17\) Dutch has two auxiliaries to indicate perfective aspect, namely hebben (have) and zijn (be):

    Als hij dat had gedaan...
    If he that had done
    'If he had done that...'
    Als ik weg was gegaan
    If I away was gone
    If I had left'

In spoken language had(den) is sometimes used in past hypotheticals instead of was/waren:

    Hadden we maar eerder weggegaan, dan hadden we niet te laat gekomen
    Had we only earlier left, then had we not too late come
    'If only we had left earlier, then we would not have been late' (Haeseryn et al. 1997:75)

The standard language would have waren weggegaan (lit. 'were left') and waren gekomen (lit. 'were come') respectively.
to introduce both temporal and conditional clauses:

(32) Als hij komt, ga ik weg
(If/when he arrives, I’ll leave)

Dutch also has the somewhat more formal subordinators *indien*, which can only mean ‘on condition that’ and *wanneer*, which, like *als*, can receive a conditional or a temporal reading. In addition, expressions like *stel (je voor dat)* (‘imagine that’), *op voorwaarde dat* (‘on condition that’) *tenzij* (‘unless’) can be used to introduce a conditional subclause.

In section 2.1.2, we saw that in English inversion can only occur with *should, were to* or *had*. In Dutch inversion can be used with any verb in both open and hypothetical conditionals including the *should* equivalent *mocht(en)* (34):

(33a) Komt hij niet, dan wordt de wedstrijd afgelast  
‘If he does not come, then the match will be cancelled’

(33b) Zou hij niet komen/Kwam hij niet, dan zou het worden afgelast  
‘If he did not come, then the match would be cancelled’

(34) Mocht je de trein missen, bel me dan  
‘Should you miss the train, call me’

Like English *would*, Dutch *zouden* is used to express politeness, as in (35).  

18 In past hypothetical conditionals too, inversion is an option in Dutch: 
*Zou hij niet zijn gekomen/ Was hij niet gekomen, dan zou de wedstrijd zijn afgelast*  
‘If he had not come, then the match would have been cancelled’

19 The following construction with *wollen* may also be used to express conditionality: 
*Het moet wel heel hard regenen, wil de wedstrijd worden afgelast*  
‘It will have to rain very hard for the match to be cancelled’

20 In some regional varieties, particularly in Flanders, *moest(en)* (‘must’ [pret]) can be used instead of *mocht(en)* or *zouden* to introduce a conditional subclause. It can even be used in past hypotheticals: 
*Moest één van de grote planetoiden onze aarde treffen, dan zou deze in stukken vliegen.*  
‘Should one of the big planetoids hit earth, then it would explode into pieces’ (Geerts et al. 1984: 546)

21 Although *zouden* (in combination with *wollen* (‘want’) or *kunnen* (‘can’)) is predominantly used to make utterances more polite, the preterite and pluperfect can occasionally be heard: 
*Ging het zo mee?*  
‘Is it okay like that?’

*What had you wanted have?* (‘What would you like?’)
zouden can be used to create what has been called the conditionnel de presse in French (36):

(35)  Zou je mij het zout willen aangeven?
     ‘Would you pass me the salt?’
(36)  De minister zou naar Argentinië zijn gevlucht 22
     ‘The minister allegedly fled to Argentina’

On the other hand, the preterite is used in wishes (37), in child language (38) and in a construction which is similar to the English it’s time we went construction (39).

(37)  Lag ik maar op het strand in Hawai`
      Lay I only on the beach in Hawai’i
     ‘If only I was lying on the beach in Hawai’i’
(38)  Ik was de politie en jij was de boef, ok? (Janssen 1994: 110)
      I was the policeman and you were the gangster, okay?
     ‘I’ll be the policeman and you be the gangster, okay?’
(39)  We moesten maar eens gaan
      We must [PRET] only some time go
     ‘It’s time we went’

Apart from occurring in past hypothetical conditionals, the Dutch pluperfect can be used to form a past imperative, which, as the command can no longer be executed, has the force of a reproach:

(40)  Had (dan) gebeld! 23
      had (then) called
     ‘You should have called’

From the various hypothetical constructions listed above, we can conclude that the verb forms used in Dutch to indicate hypotheticality closely correspond to those used in English. Both languages use a periphrastic conditional (zouden and would + infinitive)

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22 In this conditionnel de presse, zouden has present time reference and in English ‘to be supposed to’ is used. The following example from Kirsner (1969: 129) shows that the same goes for zouden used with past time reference:
De bom zou om vier uur ontploffen, maar er gebeurde niets.
‘The bomb would explode at four o’clock but nothing happened’.
Here too Dutch zouden can be used where English requires ‘allegedly’.

23 For a detailed analysis of this structure, see Duinhoven (1995), who claims this construction originated (fairly recently) from conditionals and wishes with subject-verb inversion like:

    had je gebeld (dan was ik gekomen)
    had you called (then was I come)
    (if only you had been more careful)
and the preterite in non-past time frames, and the pluperfect and a perfect conditional (zouden hebben/would have) in past time frames. They do differ, however, with respect to the distribution of these tense forms, the most important difference being that in Dutch, zouden (hebben) can be used in either clause of a hypothetical conditional. The same goes for the preterite and pluperfect, although the use of the preterite in hypothetical main clauses is rare.

2.2.3. The semantics of Dutch hypothetical conditionals: earlier discussions
In the previous section we saw that Dutch speakers in both clauses of a hypothetical conditional can choose between a periphrastic construction (with zouden) and the preterite or pluperfect. Dutch grammars pay little or no attention to the distribution of the different structures and the forms of zou(den) + infinitive and the preterite are generally believed to be in free variation:

De vormen met en zonder zou(den) kunnen in principe door elkaar gebruikt worden ... maar om stilistische redenen geeft men soms de voorkeur aan de ene of de andere mogelijkheid. Regels zijn hiervoor niet te geven. ... In het algemeen geven de zou(den)-vormen wat nadrukkelijker de niet-werkelijkheid aan.

The forms with and without zou(den) may, in principle, be used indiscriminately ... but for stylistic reasons people sometimes prefer one possibility over the other. Rules cannot be given. ... In general, the zou(den) forms indicate non-reality somewhat more emphatically (Geerts, Haeseryn, de Rooij & van den Toorn 1984: 428).

Ebeling (1962) assigns a different function to zou(den) (which is formally the past tense of zullen):

It also happens quite often that the subordinate clause has one form (which one does not matter) and the principal clause the other. Theoretically, the difference caused by the addition of ZULLEN can indeed only be slight, for it indicates that the event reported is as yet waiting a verification [sic] (Ebeling 1962: 92-93).

That there is much more to say about Dutch hypothetical conditionals was first shown by Nieuwint, who, on the basis of his findings with a small corpus of 94 sentences, concluded that the different combinations of verb forms are not simply free variants (Nieuwint 1984). Clearly, some clause combinations occur more frequently than others and replacing one form with the other (particularly replacing zou(den) with a preterite in the main clause) can produce marginally acceptable or quite unacceptable sentences indeed.

Nieuwint (1992) claims that apart from differing in distribution, the zou(den) form and the preterite also differ in meaning. In particular, he claims that Dutch has the ability to mark counterfactuality grammatically, i.e. the speaker implicitly "denies the
truth of the proposition expressed” by using the preterite rather than the zou(den) form. (Nieuwint 1992: 31). To illustrate this, he presents the following pair of als (if)-clauses:

(41a) Als dat zou kunnen,...
     ‘If that would be possible,...’
(41b) Als dat kon,...
     ‘If that were possible,...’

and states that “[a] speaker who employs (b) indicates that he is talking about an impossibility; a speaker who utters (a) indicates that he does not know whether whatever is referred to by the subject is possible, but that he hopes it can be realized” (Nieuwint 1992: 32). For a detailed analysis of the distribution of the different verb forms in Dutch hypothetical conditionals and their possible differences in meaning, the reader is again referred to Chapters 4 and 5.

2.3. French conditionals

2.3.1. History

So far we have looked at hypothetical constructions in two Germanic languages, English and Dutch. French on the other hand is a Romance language. Like the other Romance languages, French has retained a relatively rich system of verb inflections compared to Dutch and English. In Old French (9th - 13th c), hypothetical conditionals often had an imperfect subjunctive (imp.subj.) in both clauses. In accordance with its origin as a Latin pluperfect subjunctive, this form was used in both non-past (42) and past (43) conditionals (Anglade 1965; Pountain 1983; Harris 1986).

(42) Fust i li reis, n’ i oüssons damage
    were [IMP SUBJ] here the king not there had [IMP SUBJ] damage
    (Anglade 1965: 209)
    ‘If the king were there, we would not have (any) damage’

(43) S’ altrel desist, ja semblast grant mençonge
    if other said [IMP SUBJ] it seemed [IMP SUBJ] big lie
    (Anglade 1965: 211)
    ‘If another had said it, it would have seemed a big lie’

Harris (1986) concludes from the above that the imperfect subjunctive signals counterfactuality in both non-past and past time frames. Interestingly, this situation in Old French is similar to what we see today in languages like Norwegian and Dutch (and to a lesser extent English), where the temporal constraints on the use of the pluperfect are being relaxed and it can be used to signal counterfactuality in all time frames (see section 1.4.). These developments are in accordance with the life cycle of markers of
hypotheticality as formulated by Dahl (1997), where a marker first signals counterfactuality in past time frames, after which its use is extended to non-past time frames and eventually the counterfactuality constraint is relaxed as well and the marker is used to (merely) signal hypotheticality. This is exactly what seems to have happened in Old French. Like Harris, Pountain (1983: 176) also observes that the double imp.subj. construction was used for present and past counterfactuality, while hypotheticals with future time reference had a conditionnel in the main clause. In Old French the conditionnel was already in use as a marker of hypotheticality in main clauses (Anglade 1965: 186). It had originated from Vulgar Latin forms like amare habebat (past tense of the periphrastic future).

(44) De sou part vos voldreie preier (Anglade 1965: 187)
    on his part you want [COND] ask
    'On his behalf I would like to ask you'

However, Pountain adds that the two categories described above soon merged. By the Middle French period the predominant pattern for all non-past hypothetical conditionals namely became an imperfect subjunctive (which gradually replaced the imp.subj.) in the if-clause and conditionnel in the main clause, as is the case today.  

In the meantime, the temporal ambiguity of the imp.subj. described above was resolved when the pluperfect subjunctive emerged as the predominant form for the expression of past counterfactual:

(45) Vos l’ eüssiez destruit, se vos eüst pleü
    you it had destroyed [PLUP SUBJ] if you had pleased [PLUP SUBJ]
    (Anglade 1965: 211)
    'You would have destroyed it, if it had pleased you'

The conditional perfect, which today is used in past hypothetical main clauses, did not emerge until the 16th century (Pountain, 1983: 176). It gradually replaced the pluperfect subjunctive, which form, can, however, still be observed in literary language. Goosse (1993) cites the following example:

(46) Je fusse tombée s’il ne m’eût tenue
    I were fallen [PLUP SUBJ] if he not me had held [PLUP SUBJ]
    (Goosse 1993: 1671)
    'I would have fallen, if he had not held me'

To conclude, we have seen that, like English and Dutch, French also has (all but) lost past subjunctive forms. There seems to have been a period in the history of French during which counterfactuality was signalled grammatically by marking both clauses with the imperfect subjunctive. In addition we have seen that through the ages it has

24 The imperfect subjunctive has become increasingly rare since the sixteenth century and today it has all but disappeared from (spoken) French (see Grevisse 1969: 589)
often been the case that there was morphological symmetry between the two clauses, which, as we will see in section 2.3.3. below, also seems to be the case in Modern French.

2.3.2. French hypothetical constructions
In French, as in English, open conditionals have a present tense in the if-clause and a future tense in the main clause.

(47) S’il vient, je partirai
‘If he comes, I will leave’

Hypothetical constructions are formed by means of backshifted (indicative) verb forms; the imparfait and the conditionnel, which like English would + inf. is formally a future in the past: 25

(48) Il m’a dit qu’il reviendrait ce soir
‘He told me that he would come this evening’ (future in the past)

(49) Si je savais la réponse, je te le dirais
‘If I knew the answer, I would tell you’ (hyp. cond.)

Hypothetical conditionals have the imparfait in the if-clause and the conditionnel in the main clause. In the examples above we see that French is very similar to English and Dutch from the point of view of the tenses used to express hypotheticality. It is different, however, with respect to the way these tenses are formed. Where English (and Dutch) use the free morphemes will and would + inf., the French future and future in the past (conditionnel) are inflections on the verb.

In French, past hypothetical conditionals again are the same as in English. They have a plus-que-parfait (pluperfect) in the if-clause and a conditionnel du passé (perfect conditional) in the main clause:

(50) Si j’avais su la réponse, je te l’aurais dit
‘If I had known the answer, I would have told you’ 26

Another aspect in which French and English on the one hand and Dutch on the other differ is the nature of the conditional subordinator itself. Both si and if are

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25 The status of the conditionnel has long been a subject of discussion among French grammarians. In Grevisse’s Le Bon Usage (1969), the conditionnel is treated as a separate mood. In the latest edition (1993) it is claimed that the matter has finally been settled and that les linguistes s’accordent aujourd’hui pour le ranger parmi les temps de l’indicatif, comme un futur particulier, futur dans le passé ou futur hypothétique’.
‘Linguists today agree to place it among the tenses of the indicative, as a particular future, future in the past or hypothetical future.’ (Goosse 1993: 1259)

26 Again Dutch is the odd one out in this respect since it allows any combination of a pluperfect and perfect conditional.
unambiguously conditional, whereas Dutch als can be used both temporally and conditionally. In addition to si, French has other subordinators which can serve to introduce a conditional clause, like quand (‘whenever’), à moins que (‘unless’), pour peu que (‘if, provided that’), pourvu que (‘provided that’), quelquefois que, une supposition que (‘supposing that’), etc.²⁷

As we have already seen in section 1.3., other hypothetical constructions which contain an imparfait and/or conditionnel include wishes (51a, b), children’s make-believe games (52), and the conditionnel de presse (53).

(51a) Si seulement j’avais un vélo
‘If only I had a bike’
(51b) J’aimerais avoir un vélo
‘I would like to have a bike’
(52) Moi, j’étais le gendarme, et tu me volais mon vélo (Goosse 1993: 1251)
‘Me, I was the policeman and you stole my bike’
(53) Paul VI envisagerait de faire le tour du monde (Fleischman 1989: 30)
‘Paul VI is reportedly contemplating making a world tour’

From the examples above we can conclude that English and French show many similarities with respect to the use of backshifted tense forms. Like the English periphrastic conditional and conditional perfect, the French conditionnel (passé) is used in main clauses while the use of the imparfait and plus-que-parfait is largely restricted to (conditional) subclauses. Dutch is different in that it allows the preterite and the periphrastic conditional in both main clauses and subclauses. However, Dutch shares with French specific constructions like (52) and (53), which are not known in English.

2.3.3. Le futur and le conditionnel in si-clauses
In section 2.1.3. we discussed the (ab)use of would in English hypothetical conditionals. French is similar to English in that the use of the conditionnel in si-clauses is often described in grammars and textbooks as something which should be avoided:

Pour commencer par une grosse chose, grosse comme l’Himalaya dans le pays des solécismes, il faut écarter avant tout du paysage ce conditionnel vulgaire que les illétrés et parfois aussi les demi-lettrés mettent après si introduisant une donnée d’hypothèse potentielle ou irréelle. (Grevisse 1970: 338)
‘To begin with an enormity, enormous as the Himalayas in the land of grammatical errors, one first and foremost needs to strip the landscape of this conditionnel vulgaire which the illiterate and semi-literate use after si to introduce a potential or unreal hypothetical given’²⁸

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²⁷ Peels (1989: 16-17) notes that after conditionals introduced by quelquefois que, une supposition que the conditionnel may be used in the conditional clause.

²⁸ According to Goosse (1993), the use of the conditionnel (and futur) after si is in some cases perfectly grammatical. As a starting point for his list of exceptions, however, the word si is taken irrespective of the fact that it has other uses besides introducing a conditional subclause. The only exceptions
In the latest edition of *Le Bon Usage* this prescriptive approach has been abandoned and a rather different tune is sung:

En effet, la langue populaire met assez souvent le conditionnel. (Goosse 1993: 1670)

‘Indeed, the popular language uses the conditionnel quite often.’

Evidence for the use of the *conditionnel* in *si*-clauses is cited in Peels (1989), who found that in nearly ten percent of around two hundred hypothetical conditionals he came across in a corpus, a *conditionnel* was used after *si*. It seems to be the case, then, that in French (as in English) there is a tendency towards morphological symmetry between the two clauses of hypothetical conditionals.

2.4. Conclusion: a contrastive analysis

In this chapter we have looked at the use of backshifted tense forms in English, Dutch and French hypothetical constructions. All three languages originally had a past subjunctive which has (all but) disappeared through the ages. In Dutch and English, which are typologically closely related, past modals (*zouden* and *would* respectively) were introduced as markers of hypotheticality. In French the *conditionnel* is used, which, despite its origin as a periphrastic future in Latin, is an inflected verb form. In addition to these (periphrastic) conditional forms, past tenses (*preterite* and *imparfait*) can still be used by all three languages to mark non-past hypothetical constructions. In past hypothetical constructions, all three languages use the pluperfect and the perfect conditional. We see, then, that despite the typological differences between, English and Dutch on the one hand and French on the other, there are many similarities with respect to the verb forms available for marking non-past and past hypotheticals. There are, however, some important differences with respect to the distribution of these forms, the most relevant of which concern hypothetical conditional sentences.

In English and French, the use of the *preterite* and *pluperfect* is restricted to (conditional) subclauses, while the (periphrastic) conditional and perfect conditional occur in main clauses. For Dutch it is much more difficult to give any well-defined rules for the distribution and possible differences in meaning of the different alternatives. Both *zouden* and the *preterite* can occur in the *if*-clause as well as the main clause of non-past hypothetical conditionals and in past hypotheticals any combination of a pluperfect and perfect conditional can occur.

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mentioned which involve a hypothetical conditional containing a *conditionnel* in the subclause are non-predictive conditionals. As we have seen in section 2.1.3, these can be paraphrased as *s’il est vrai que* (‘if it’s true that’) or *s’il on estime que* (‘if we think that’) and allow any tense form (including the *conditionnel*) in either clause.

Je veux être foudroyé si elle n’irait pas remettre une lettre d’amour à la reine si je l’en priais. (Goosse, 1993: 1673)

‘I want to be killed if she would not go and deliver a love letter to the queen if I would beg her to.’
The following tables summarise the use of backshifted verb forms in English, French and Dutch conditionals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>non-past</th>
<th>if-clause</th>
<th>main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>preterite</td>
<td>(periphrastic) conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>imparfait</td>
<td>conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>(periphrastic) conditional / preterite</td>
<td>(periphrastic) conditional / preterite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>past</th>
<th>if-clause</th>
<th>main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
<td>perfect conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
<td>perfect conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>pluperfect / perfect conditional</td>
<td>pluperfect / perfect conditional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have seen that it is not clear to what extent the various Dutch alternatives are in free variation or differ in meaning, as suggested by Nieuwint (1992). The description of Dutch hypothetical conditionals is further complicated by the fact that, for the other two languages too, there is a lack of clarity with respect to the interpretation of (non)-past hypotheticals, as we have seen in the previous chapter. A new theoretical account of conditional sentences will be outlined in Chapter 4, whose goals are to provide more insight into the relation between the use of backshifted verb forms and the hypotheticality and/or counterfactuality of the utterance and to investigate any possible differences between English and French on the one hand and Dutch on the other in this respect.
3. The acquisition of conditional sentences

3.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the acquisition of conditional sentences, both by children and by second (or foreign) language learners. First, we will examine the development of hypothetical conditional sentences in child language and how children deal with them in the course of their linguistic and cognitive development. In the second part of the chapter, the focus will be on the findings reported in several articles on second language acquisition, which investigate to what extent the first language and/or general learner strategies play a role in the acquisition of conditionals in a second or foreign language.

3.1. First language acquisition

3.1.1. Cognitive versus linguistic development

Compared to other complex sentences, conditionals appear late in child language. In a longitudinal study of two Italian children (1;3 - 4;0) Bates (1976) found that open conditionals appeared from roughly 2;6 onwards, while she did not find evidence that hypothetical conditionals were acquired at all before the age of four. Bowerman (1986) and Reilly (1982) also give 2;6 as the age at which the first English conditionals appear. Katis (1997) found that open conditionals appeared as early as 1;10 in the speech of her (Greek) daughter, but she adds that conditionals were infrequent until the beginning of the fourth year.

As conditional sentences are conceptually and morphosyntactically complex, it does not seem very surprising that they take a long time for children to master. It is, however, very difficult to pin down the exact cause of their late appearance. Children generally produce other complex sentences which express contingency relations like and, when, because, so etc. before the first conditionals appear:

(1) C: 2;2 (Holding toy beetle with line painted on for mouth): It don’t bite me 'cause it don’t have no mouth (Bowerman 1986: 289)
(2) C: 2;2 (Playing with tiny books that fit into a box): I going to put them in a box so them won’t fall down. (Bowerman 1986: 291)

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1 One reason for this early appearance may be that they showed up in diary notes on the acquisition of temporals and conditionals. As conditionals are so infrequent for a prolonged period of time, they may not have showed up in other studies, where data was collected during certain recording sessions only. She also notes that the earliest conditionals tend to have a regulatory function (often prohibiting, e.g. if we touch the potty, we get very dirty). and these often mirrored the (prohibitive) conditionals directed to the child. Finally, the Greek subordinator ama, which was used initially, has a wider function than English if. It can also have a temporal meaning: when/whenever.
Apart from being complex sentences, conditionals also describe situations which do not coincide with reality. One might think that the difficulty young children have with conditionals is due to the fact that they are tied to the here and now. However, Bowerman shows that very young children are able to describe uncertainty or unreal situations quite early. She found that children younger than two can use almost correctly, thus showing that they can compare an actual situation to one that could have occurred or has not yet occurred.

(3) C 1;10 (M has just caught a pitcher that C had set down on the edge of the sandbox): Almost fall (Bowerman 1986: 290).

An example like the following shows that very young children can also make predictions:

(4) D 2;3 (in response to M: Okay, would you like to climb on your plate-your seat?) I too big to climb on my plate. I might fall and cry. (Bowerman 1986: 291)

The relationship between these clauses could be rephrased as a future predictive conditional: if I climb on my plate, I might fall and cry, yet conditionals like these tend not to be used by children this young. Other examples by Bowerman show that two-year-olds can also refer to situations which are not true (counterfactual) as in (5a) or (5b):

(5a) C 2;0 I thought me do that
(5b) C 2;1 I wish me have a car. I wish me have a airplane (Bowerman 1986: 290)

Apparently the late appearance of (hypothetical) conditionals cannot be due to the difficulty of concepts like real versus unreal. Children can and do make this distinction very early on. In short, all cognitive pre-requisites seem to be present long before the first conditionals appear.

Furthermore, Jakubowicz (1983) found that even when children are able to form conditionals, they are not yet capable of giving them the same functions they have for adults. She investigated what functions if-clauses have in children’s discourse and on the basis of what clues conditionals are interpreted by children. It appeared that 4-year-old children did not distinguish between open conditionals like if I have a marble, I will give it to you and hypotheticals like if I had a marble, I would give it to you. Instead, they tended to interpret if p, q solely on the basis of the lexical material of p and q and treated them as two sequential coordinated assertions (I have a marble and I give it to you). Five-year-old children did seem to take the verbal endings into consideration and were capable of interpreting hypothetical conditionals correctly, although open conditionals were still frequently interpreted as assertions, which was no longer the case with 8-year-olds.

Wing and Kofsky Scholnick (1981) tested the comprehension of because, although, if (open conditionals, non-past hypothetical conditionals), and unless with three groups
of children: first graders (mean 6:10), third graders (mean 8:10) and fifth graders (mean 10:10). The children heard sentences containing these connectors and were tested on two dimensions. They were asked questions regarding belief about the clauses and a question about the entailment relation between the clauses, which they classified as either positive (the truth of one clause implies the truth of the other) or negative. It appeared that positive entailment (because, open conditionals and hypothetical conditionals) was easier than negative entailment (although and unless).

With respect to the factor belief, they found that correct judgements regarding sentences expressing positive belief (because and although) were made earlier than those regarding sentences expressing disbelief (non-past hypothetical conditionals). This latter sentence type was mastered earlier than open conditionals and sentences with unless, which express uncertainty, which is in accordance with Jakubowicz’s findings described above. Unfortunately, past counterfactual conditionals were not included in this test.

Reilly offers evidence that (past) counterfactual conditionals pose problems for young children. She found that 3-year-old children often deny a present or past counterfactual if-clause:

(6)  
Adult: What if you were a snake?  
Child:(3) I’m not a snake, I’m Janine (Reilly 1982: 116)

(7)  
Adult: What if the Daddy Bear’s porridge had been the Mommy Bear’s?  
Molly(3;3) silence  
Adult: (repeats question)  
Molly It’s not  
Adult Well, what if the Baby Bear’s porridge had been the Mamma’s porridge?  
Molly (laughs) It’s the Baby Bear’s (Reilly 1982: 90)

Bates found that Italian hypothetical conditional morphosyntax is not fully mastered until the age of 6 (Bates, 1976) while Reilly (1982), who tested children as old as 8, showed that even this oldest age group had difficulty correctly imitating past counterfactuals, and a large number of the eight-year-olds could not respond appropriately to what if + pluperfect questions like the ones above (see also section 3.1.2. below).

According to Bates (1976), the difficulty lies in the fact that in a hypothetical conditional a hypothetical situation is marked as well as its relation to the real world. Kuczaj & Daly (1979), who share this idea of semantic and conceptual difficulty, rather than syntactic difficulty, also found that reference to future hypothetical events emerges earlier than reference to past hypothetical events:

The child experiences more difficulty in contrasting ‘what could have happened but did not’ (hypothetical) with ‘what did happen’ (actual) than in contrasting
We have seen that, although even very young children are capable of making predictions and describing situations which do not coincide with reality, the formation of (hypothetical) conditionals lags behind that of other complex sentences. Even after they have started to initiate conditionals themselves, children often have trouble correctly interpreting (hypothetical) conditionals presented to them during experiments. As yet, attempts to establish to what extent the problem of the semantics of conditionals is a cognitive or linguistic matter have not been successful.

3.1.2. The acquisition of hypothetical conditional morphosyntax
Open (future predictive) conditionals are the first to appear in child language. The children only use simple present tense and future tense forms. Kuczaj & Daly (1979) studied data from both a naturalistic (longitudinal and cross-sectional) and a quasi experimental study. Their naturalistic data samples covered the age range 2;6 to 5;6 while in their experimental study children as old as 7;9 were tested. They found that during the preschool years, there is a shift from implicit to explicit hypothetical reference. Implicit hypothetical reference means the children can give a more or less meaningful answer to a question containing a hypothetical if-clause but they cannot mark their answers by means of the appropriate forms as in, for example:

(8) Adult: What would happen if you fell out of an airplane?  
Child: I fall and fall and fall (3;2) (Kuczaj & Daly 1979: 569)

Bates found that Italian children also first react to hypothetical conditionals without using the appropriate (subjunctive and conditional) verb morphology. She calls this the indicative stage, during which the children either cannot respond at all or use the simple present indicative as in (9a). Next, the Italian children (from roughly 4;10 onwards) start to use conditional verb forms but these are still outweighed by the present indicative, imperfect past (9b) or a modal verb like must is inserted (9c):

(9a) Adult: Allora, se tu fossi una scimmia, che faresti  
             ‘Well then, if you were a monkey, what would you do?’
Child: Mangio la banana  
             ‘I eat the banana’ (Bates 1976: 233)
(9b) Child: Mangiavo la banana  
             ‘I was eating the banana’ (Bates 1976: 236)
(9c) Child: Devo mangiare la banana  
             ‘I must eat the banana’ (Bates 1976: 236)

Bates call this the alternative stage. Her findings are consistent with Kuczaj & Daly’s data on English. When children begin to make what Kuczaj & Daly call explicit hypothetical reference, they tend to use inappropriate forms and are inconsistent in their
THE ACQUISITION OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

responses. Alternations between open conditionals (present tense/will + inf.) and hypothetical forms (preterite/would + inf.) are also observed by Reilly:

(10) Matthew (2;9): If I were a zebra, then I have stripes (Reilly 1982: 104)

Interestingly, a common deviation from the adult norm, particularly in American English, is to mark the if-clause of the hypothetical with would:

(11a) A.K. (3;11) If you would have eated all that turkey, your tummy would have kersploded (Kuczaj & Daly 1979: 575)

(11b) H.K. (3;6) I'll just watch T.V. if you would sleep so late (Kuczaj & Daly 1979: 570)

In the previous chapter we have seen that this use of would can also be observed in adult language. However, Reilly (1982) found that during a sentence imitation task even eight-year-olds often could not repeat past hypotheticals correctly and produced forms like would been or woulda been in as many as 75% of if-clauses like the one in (12) below:

(12) Model: If I had been fishing, I would have caught the biggest fish
Eight: If I woulda been fishing, I would've caught the biggest fish (Reilly 1982: 87)

Trévise (1979) observes that the same tendency (i.e. the use of a conditional verb form in both clauses) can be found among French children acquiring their mother tongue, Spanish children acquiring French, and in many other interlanguages and concludes that the marking of both clauses by means of a (periphrastic) conditional is a characteristic of a stage of acquisition.

3.2. Second language acquisition

This section constitutes an overview of the relevant literature on the acquisition of hypothetical conditionals by foreign language learners. Not only do these constructions appear late in child language, they are notoriously difficult for second language learners as well.3

Berent (1985) studied the acquisition of English open, hypothetical and past hypothetical conditional sentences by 55 adult learners with various language

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2 The use of a preterite in the main clause instead of (would + inf.) has also been observed but seems to occur much less frequently than the use of would in the if-clause:

Adult: What would have happened if they couldn't have found any water?
Child (3;11): They gotted a horse (Kuczaj & Daly 1979: 574)

3 Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) cite evidence that conditionals are among the five most difficult problems encountered by ESL teachers.
backgrounds. The learners completed a production and a comprehension task.

In the production task, the learners were asked to fill in the appropriate verb forms in 24 conditionals. The factors "clause order" (initial versus final if-clauses) and "target clause" (verb forms missing from if-clause versus main clause) were crossed. He found different orders of acquisition in production and comprehension for the three conditional types. Open conditionals were easiest to produce, followed by hypothetical and past hypothetical conditionals. Berent accounted for these differences in terms of the relative degrees of markedness assigned to the verb forms involved. More particularly, he suggested that the "indicative forms used in real conditionals are unmarked relative to the nonindicative forms used in unreal and past unreal conditions" (Berent 1985: 360). As far as hypothetical conditionals are concerned, he claimed that past hypotheticals (e.g. had known, would have known) are more marked than non-past hypotheticals (knew, would know) simply because past hypothetical forms involve more morphological material. The marked status of the pluperfect was further underlined by the observation that in declarative sentences past-in-the-past is frequently expressed by the preterite instead of the pluperfect.

The comprehension task consisted of 24 conditionals, each followed by four inferences. The subjects were asked to select the appropriate inferences. It was found that the order of acquisition for the comprehension task was different from that for production. Inferences associated with real (open) conditionals were more difficult than inferences associated with non-past and past hypothetical conditionals. Again Berent explains these results in terms of relative markedness, this time not on the level of formal or semantic characteristics but on the level of pragmatics. He does this by assuming that real (open) conditionals have the feature "+ uncertain", whereas hypothetical conditionals "presuppose the negative (...) of the propositions contained in those sentences" (Berent 1985: 363), are unreal and can therefore be characterized as "- uncertain". His conclusion that uncertainty is more marked than disbelief is in accordance with Wing and Kofsky Scholnick's (1981) findings for first language acquisition described in section 3.1.1. above.

In addition to the varying orders of acquisition for production and comprehension, Berent found that the factors "target clause" and "clause order" influenced the learners' performance. His "low advanced" learners were more successful in producing the correct verb forms in final if- and main clauses than in initial if- and main clauses. In other words, they were more successful in working from left to right than from right to left. Moreover, within the set of targets appearing in final position, if-clauses were easier than main clauses, which Berent ascribed to a principle that has been observed in child language acquisition, namely that sentences in which a subordinate clause follows the main clause are easier to acquire than sentences with the opposite order. By studying the acquisition of English by learners from many different language backgrounds, Berent suppressed any investigation into the role of the L1.

The present thesis takes on a different approach, as the emphasis is on the interaction of a specific L1 (Dutch) with two target languages (English and French). Advanced Dutch learners of English show a tendency to use would and the conditionnel in the if-clauses of hypothetical conditional sentences despite the fact that considerable attention is paid to the correct English forms (i.e. a preterite and pluperfect) in the
This use of would and the conditionnel in if-clauses is not unique to Dutch-English/French interlanguage but can also be observed in the interlanguage of learners with various other language backgrounds (German, Swedish, Hungarian and Polish are mentioned among others) even where transfer from the first language is not an option. Trévise (1979), for example, tested French students of English and found that although neither standard French nor English allows the (periphrastic) conditional in the if-clause, the learners not only inserted would in spontaneously produced conditional clauses but even inserted would when asked to repeat a (correct) English hypothetical conditional.

Wekker, Kellerman & Hermans (1982) conducted two written experiments in Dutch and English involving past and non-past hypothetical conditionals in order to find out what could be the reason why this particular error is so difficult to eradicate while other differences between Dutch and English are much more easily overcome. On the basis of the evidence cited above, Wekker et al. hypothesized that the erroneous use of would is the result of a tendency towards transparency. This means that learners use a (periphrastic) conditional in both clauses to overtly indicate hypotheticality, whether or not this is an option in their first language. This is in accordance with one of Slobin’s operating principles, which says that learners “strive to maintain a one-to-one mapping between underlying semantic structures and surface forms” (Slobin 1977: 186). In practice this meant that it was hypothesized that the Dutch students would either use the correct form or the maximally transparent +/+ structure, irrespective of their preferences in Dutch.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Dutch non-past hypothetical conditionals allow all four combinations of a preterite and a periphrastic conditional while past hypotheticals allow all four combinations of a pluperfect and perfect conditional. Wekker et al. (1982) coded the Dutch (and English) structures as follows: a ‘+’ indicates the presence of a periphrastic conditional (i.e. zouden or would) while a ‘-’ indicates that a preterite or pluperfect is used.

(14a)  +/+  Als het morgen zou regenen, zou de wedstrijd worden afgelast
       *'If it would rain tomorrow, the match would be cancelled'
(14b)  -/+  Als het morgen regende, zou de wedstrijd worden afgelast
       'If it rained tomorrow, the match would be cancelled'
(14c)  -/-  Als het morgen regende, werd de wedstrijd afgelast
       *'If it rained tomorrow, the match was cancelled'

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4 Slobin’s transparency principle was formulated for first language acquisition and could indeed also account for the use of the double conditional observed in child language.
(14d)  +/− Als het morgen zou rege ne, werd de wedstrijd afgelast
       *'If it would rain tomorrow, the match was cancelled'

(15a)  +/+ Als het zou hebben geregend, zou de wedstrijd zijn afgelast
       *'If it would have rained, the match would have been cancelled'

(15b)  −/+ Als het had geregend, zou de wedstrijd zijn afgelast
       *'If it had rained, the match would have been cancelled’

(15c)  −/− Als het had geregend, was de wedstrijd afgelast
       *'If it had rained, the match had been cancelled’

(15d)  +/− Als het zou hebben geregend, was de wedstrijd afgelast
       *'If it would have rained, the match had been cancelled’

Both experiments were conducted in Dutch and in English to see what the learners’
preferences were in their first language and to what extent these were mirrored in the
English test. The first experiment consisted of four short paragraphs (two past and two
non-past) which were read out to 175 first, second and third year students of English.
The subjects were asked to complete the paragraph by writing down an appropriate
hypothetical conditional sentence. During the second experiment, those same
paragraphs were presented and this time, at the end of each paragraph, the students had
to rank order the four different hypothetical constructions (or their English equivalents)
in order of preference.

The results of the first experiment showed that in non-past time frames there was
a strong preference for the +/- structure in Dutch (95%) whereas the equivalent of the
correct English structure (-/+ ) was used in only 3% of the cases. In the English version
+/- constructions were also preferred (70%), while the remaining 30% consisted of
correct forms only. These results suggest that although there was some knowledge on
the part of the learners, they also showed a strong tendency to use the maximally
transparent construction (+/−). However, in view of the fact that in Dutch preference
was also given to a periphrastic conditional in both clauses, direct transfer from the first
language (L1) could not be ruled out.

Far fewer errors were produced in English past hypotheticals (16% +/-) and the
number of correct structures was high (81% -/+ ). The pluperfect was used in only 3%
of the main clauses (3% -/- and 0% +/-). In Dutch, the construction with a pluperfect
in both clauses (-/-) was most frequent (50%), followed by −/+ (28%) and +/- (14%).

5 Structures with a preterite in the main clause, namely −/− (0% ) and +/- (2%) were hardly used at all.
6 The average percentage of if would was 70% but the percentage differed across the three levels. The
third years (47% +/- ) did better than the second and first years with 81% and 75% respectively.
7 The results of the second test showed that the preference for +/- in Dutch non-past is not so strong:
(64% versus 95% in test 1). The same goes for the preference for −/− with past time reference (20% versus
50% in exp. 1). Seeing that the stories and target sentences were the same as in the first
experiment, these differences must have been the result of the different nature of the task. In experiment
2 the subjects were asked to rank order the 4 alternatives (or their English equivalents) in order of
preference. It is likely that the tendency towards the use of +/- (non-past) and −/− (past) probably
decreased when the subjects were faced with four very similar sentences which are all grammatical in
Dutch.
In addition to this analysis at group level, a shift analysis was carried out, which involved a comparison of individual subject behaviour across the two languages. Cases where a subject produced the same structure in the Dutch and English version of a certain sentence were counted as non-shifters whereas cases where a subject used a different structure in English from the one (s)he used in Dutch were counted as shifters. Shifting to the correct English -/+ structure would be evidence of knowledge on the part of the learners, whereas shifting to +/+ would support the transparency hypothesis. Non-shifting would be the result of transfer.

For non-past hypotheticals, 71% of the cases were non-shifters. Of these instances where the same structure was used in Dutch and in English, 96% concerned the +/+ structure, which is not surprising, given that this is by far the most frequent structure in Dutch. Where shifting did take place, it was overwhelmingly towards the correct structure. According to Wekker et al., the fact that many learners used +/+ in both languages is not sufficient proof that transfer played a major role since “a learner whose preferred Dutch structure is +/+ and who values maximum transparency in his L2 has in effect nowhere else to go than to the equivalent English structures” (Wekker et al. 1982, 37). The only way to unambiguously demonstrate a tendency to transparency would be finding shifts to +/+ but in non-past contexts, these are hard to find since shifting to +/+ in English requires a non +/+ structure in Dutch, and these were infrequent.

The percentage of shifters was much larger with past than with non-past hypotheticals, namely 71%. Most shifting was away from the double pluperfect (-/-) and in the direction of the correct -/+ structures, indicating knowledge but there was also shifting towards +/+ (17%) i.e. some evidence for the transparency hypothesis. Unlike what we saw with the non-past +/+ structure, transfer of the Dutch double pluperfect was not an option. In fact, in main clauses, neither the preterite (0%), nor the pluperfect (3%) seemed to be an option for these advanced learners. Apparently they know that English hypothetical main clauses contain would and the problem lies solely in the formation of hypothetical if-clauses. Non-shifters were mainly cases where a -/+ structure was used in both languages (81%) while only 10% used +/+ in both languages.

In conclusion, Wekker et al. found that especially the third years formed many correct -/+ structures, indicating knowledge, particularly where they were shifts. With the cases where +/+ was used in both languages, there was no way of knowing whether the if woulds were the result of transfer or evidence for a tendency to transparency. Shifts to +/+ , unequivocal evidence for the transparency hypothesis, were found only to a limited extent in past time frames. Wekker et al. therefore concluded that the role of the first language might be to catalyse the learners’ tendency to a one-to-one mapping between underlying semantic structures and surface forms.

In a later article, Kellerman (1989) further examines the use of would in if-clauses by Dutch learners of English. Nieuwint’s description of Dutch conditionals was taken as a starting point (see section 2.2.3.) so it was assumed that speakers of Dutch have the ability to grammatically encode the feature counterfactual by using a preterite, whereas the would equivalent zouden is more neutral in that it indicates hypotheticality. This modal meaning of the preterite can be said to be marked compared to its more frequent
and unmarked use to refer to real situations in the past:

(16a) When he arrived yesterday, he went straight to bed
(16b) If he arrived before eight o'clock tomorrow, he would be able to join us for dinner

Accordingly, Kellerman hypothesized that, even though transfer of the preterite would result in correct if-clauses, "Dutch learners of English at advanced levels are unwilling to transfer the marked modal meanings of the Dutch past tenses to their formal English equivalents. If they did so, they would be imbuing the English past tenses with the same idiosyncratic meaning that they know is permitted in Dutch" (Kellerman 1989: 101). Instead they would overtly indicate hypotheticality in both clauses, at the expense of the grammatical distinction between hypothetical and counterfactual conditionals available to them in Dutch. In addition, he predicted that the difference between the prototypical (real past) and modal (hypothetical) meaning of the past tense would be sufficiently great to constitute a particular difficulty for Dutch learners in imaginary future time contexts (Kellerman 1992).

This is consistent with earlier research by Kellerman (cf. Kellerman 1979, 1986) where it was shown that Dutch learners of English (and German) were less willing to transfer the less prototypical meanings of polysemous words than (more) prototypical meanings. Moreover, using the unambiguously hypothetical +/+ construction leads to morphological symmetry, which, as we have seen in this and the previous chapter seems to be a natural tendency in many (inter)languages.

Peels (1989) also studied the acquisition of non-past hypothetical conditionals by learners with various language backgrounds. A written and an oral elicitation task were presented to university and polytechnic students of four target languages: Dutch and French learners of English, English learners of French, German students of Dutch and Dutch students of German to see to what extent groups with different source and target languages would behave differently. During the written test, the subjects were given 40 sentences in the target language (8 hypothetical conditionals and 32 distractors) and were asked to indicate whether these sentences were grammatical or not and if not, what was wrong with them. Half the target sentences had a (periphrastic) conditional in the if-clause (ungrammatical in French and English, grammatical in German) and the other half a past tense (grammatical in French and English, ungrammatical in German). As both variants can occur in Dutch, none of the target sentences in the Dutch test were ungrammatical. During the oral test, 8 short stories containing a present indefinite and future version of one of the target sentences were read out twice to the subjects in their L1. The subjects then had to retell the stories with the aid of a list of key words.

Furthermore, on suspicion that, particularly in Dutch, the morphosyntax of the verb and the time reference of the if-clause can influence the choice of verb form, the factors verb (strong versus weak) and time reference (present/indefinite versus future) were

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8 In German the Konjunktiv II (past subjunctive) is used in both clauses, although it is often replaced by a periphrastic conditional (würden + inf.) (see also section 1.3)
crossed. Moreover, since Peels, like Kellerman (1989) assumed that the degree of probability of the situation in the if-clause will influence the choice of verb form in Dutch, a pretest was carried out in which Dutch subjects were asked to rank order the eight target sentences according to the degree of (im)probability of the if-clause. On the basis of the rank order resulting from this experiment, a distinction was made between conditionals with *low or average hypotheticality* and those with *high hypotheticality*. This was in accordance with Comrie’s *hypotheticality continuum* (see section 1.4.), where *high hypotheticality* means low probability and vice versa.

Various predictions were made, based on a contrastive analysis between the different pairs of languages, structural disambiguation and morphological symmetry respectively. According to the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) “[i]ndividuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture” (Lado 1957: 2). Therefore, it was hypothesized that difficulty (and errors) would arise where the source and target languages differ with respect to the formation of hypothetical conditionals whereas those target languages that were similar to the learners’ mother tongue should not pose any problems. In this case it meant that French learners of English and English learners of French should not have any problems forming correct conditionals in the target language since both languages require a preterite (or imparfait) in the if-clause and a (periphrastic) conditional in the main clause (+/ ). Similarly, German learners would not have any problems forming Dutch hypothetical conditionals since the target language allows the equivalent of the L1 structure with a (periphrastic) conditional in both clauses (+/ ). Dutch learners of German could successfully transfer their L1 +/ structure but would run into problems if they relied on the -/+ structure (i.e. the structure with a preterite in the if-clause) since German requires a (periphrastic) conditional (past subjunctive or würden + inf) in both clauses. Finally, in the case of Dutch learners of English, relying on +/+ would lead to error whereas relying on -/+ would lead to success (-/- and +/- are rare in Dutch non-past hypotheticals).

The structural disambiguation hypothesis predicts that all groups of learners would show a tendency to maximal transparency by avoiding the use of the ambiguous past tense, which would result in the use of a construction with a (periphrastic) conditional in both clauses (+/ ). Finally, a tendency to morphological symmetry between the clauses suggests the use of either a double conditional (+/+) or a past tense in both clauses (-/-) by all learners.

The results showed that in relative terms the predictions on the basis of the CAH were supported: French learners of English and English learners of French used the preterite (or imparfait) more often than did German learners of Dutch and Dutch learners of German, who relied heavily on the double conditional construction permitted in both the source and the target language. It was not the case, however, that French and English students did not make any mistakes at all. Particularly in the written test, +++ was not uncommon even though both the L1 and the L2 prescribe -/+. It seems to be the case, then, that they tended to mark both clauses explicitly for hypotheticality.
as predicted by the structural disambiguation hypothesis. 9

As far as the Dutch students of French were concerned, they used more correct forms (and fewer if woulds) than the Dutch students of German but less than the French students of English and the English students of French. Peels concludes that in the case of French students of English and English students of French, structural disambiguation and morphological symmetry seems to be the only adequate explanations for the occurrence of the if would error while Dutch students of English “use ‘if + would’, as a result of L1 transfer and their attempt to use an unambiguous verb form which parallels that in the apodosis (main clause, E.S.)” (Peels 1989: 80). Again we see that it is not entirely clear to what extent and in what way a first language like Dutch influences the acquisition of English hypothetical conditionals.

As far as the other variables that were tested are concerned, it needs to be said that on the whole first year students produced more +/- structures than third year students. Moreover, both the frequencies of the (periphrastic) conditional and the past tense were much lower in the oral than in the written test, because the present tense was often used there. As far as the morphosyntax of the verbs was concerned, more conditional verb forms were used when the verb was weak. As mentioned before, the level of hypotheticality was also taken into consideration. This had no effect on the use of the past tense but did seem to influence the use of the (periphrastic) conditional. More conditional verb forms occurred in sentences with high hypotheticality (low probability) than in those with low or average hypotheticality (high probability). However, it is not clear on the basis of which criteria the subjects of the pretest ordered the conditionals from low to high hypotheticality. The following sentences were offered to them without context and it is doubtful whether they were able to determine if the situation in the if-clause in (17) is more or less probable than that in (18):

(17) If Mr. Simpson paid his bills tomorrow, his bank would give him new credit
(18) If my brother opened a photographic studio in New York, my parents would be very proud of him (Peels 1989: 40-41)

The subjects did not know who the Mr Simpson in (17) is, let alone whether he would be capable of paying his bills and in (18), it is not entirely clear what the deictic element my refers to. If it was interpreted as referring to the subject judging the sentence, the fact whether he or she actually has a(n artistic) brother may have influenced their judgement. Moreover, the subjects were asked to ignore the content of the main clause but this seems to have been very hard to do given that (19) was assigned the highest mark (lowest probability) while (20) was considered most probable.

(19) If it came to a war between the United States and Monaco, I would eat my hat
(20) If Susan was less nervous tomorrow morning, she would certainly pass her

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9 The +/- construction was widespread, particularly in the written test. This could well be due to the nature of the task. The subjects may have overlooked the error when judging the sentences for acceptability. During the oral test, +/- constructions were less frequent.
driving test (Peels 1989: 40-41) (emphasis added)

In (20), the adverb *certainly* in the main clause may well have contributed to the fact that this sentence ranked lowest in the hypotheticality hierarchy. Finally, and most importantly, there were two versions of each sentence; one with present indefinite reference and one with future time reference (in which case, an adverbial of future time was added). As a result, half of the subjects was faced with (21a) while the other half was given (21b):

(21a) If Mr Simpson paid his bills more regularly, his bank would give him new credit
(21b) If Mr Simpson paid his bills tomorrow, his bank would give him new credit

The *if*-clause in (21a) is an example of what Goodman (1955: 6) calls a counter comparative, i.e. a counterfactual statement containing a comparative: Mr Simpson does not (pay his bills more regularly), which is not highly unlikely, it is counterfactual. (21b), on the other hand, has future time reference and again, it is very hard to tell how likely it is that he will actually pay his bills. It seems then, that the variable low versus high hypotheticality is not a valid basis for a description of the semantics of Dutch hypothetical conditionals.

Another problem concerning the connection between the level of hypotheticality and the verb forms preferred in Dutch is formed by the results of Wekker et al.’s study. It should be remembered that, there, 95% of the students ended the two (non-past) stories with a *+/+* construction. However, the *if*-clauses of these conditionals (given in English below) do not seem to be very probable at all:

(22) If Jesse Owens took part in the Olympic Games now, he would not even make it to the finals
(23) If the train from Nijmegen arrived in Venlo 10 minutes earlier, you would be able to catch the bus for Velden easily

In fact, neither Jesse Owen’s participation in the next Olympic Games, nor the earlier arrival of the train seem to be possible at all. If, as was claimed, the Dutch (can) use the preterite to indicate counterfactuality or, in terms of Peels’ research high hypotheticality (= low probability), we would have expected more preterites than were actually used. Apparently it is insufficiently clear how the semantics of Dutch conditionals work, and, as a result, neither is the extent of its influence on the acquisition of conditionals in other languages.

3.3. Conclusion

Because of their linguistic and cognitive complexity conditional sentences are difficult to acquire. They appear late in child language and when they do, they are initially limited to open conditionals. Even when cognitive pre-requisites are apparently met,
hypothetical conditionals, which require a good grasp of the tense system, including modal auxiliaries and, in some languages, subjunctive forms, remain problematic for a relatively long period of time. Even eight-year-old English children were often not capable of correctly repeating a past hypothetical conditional read out to them. For second language learners too, hypothetical conditionals are often a stumbling block. This is evidenced in the acquisition of English hypothetical conditionals, where learners often use a periphrastic conditional in both clauses (*If it would rain tomorrow, the match would be cancelled) where a preterite is required (If it rained tomorrow, the match would be cancelled). Results from experiments by, among others, Peels (1989) showed that even speakers whose first language is not likely to give rise to this error used the double would construction in their interlanguage. In the articles dealt with in this chapter, this phenomenon is chiefly ascribed to the fact that second (and first) language learners strive for transparency. More particularly, the learners react to the marked modal use of the preterite in hypothetical if-clauses and as a result overtly mark both clauses by means of a periphrastic conditional. In the case of Dutch students of English, where the first language allows both the equivalent of the correct and the incorrect construction, it has proved difficult to isolate the role of the L1, not least because the relationship between form and function of Dutch conditionals has not yet been accurately described.
4. A revised approach to the analysis of hypothetical conditionals

4.0. Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to solve the problems of the interpretation of non-past hypothetical conditionals, a topic which was already under discussion in sections 1.4. and 3.2. This is done by means of a detailed theoretical account of the interplay between time frame, the inherent temporal characteristics of the lexical content of the conditional, and the (im)probability or impossibility of the (hypothetical) world created by the if-clause. In addition, this chapter serves as the theoretical framework for the corpus-based investigation of Dutch hypothetical conditionals in Chapter 5, and the experiments reported on in Chapter 6.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section 4.1. is a review of the problems with respect to the interpretation of non-past hypotheticals encountered in the literature on conditionals in general (4.1.1.) and Dutch conditionals in particular (4.1.2.). In order to assess the interplay of time frame, moment of speech and the inherent temporal characteristics of propositions in if-clauses, a description of Klein's work (1994) is given in 4.2., as this theoretical framework is pre-eminently suitable for our goal. Various key issues are surveyed: How do tense (4.2.2.) and aspect work and which and how many types of lexical content should we distinguish? (4.2.3.). How do temporal adverbials contribute to the meaning of an utterance? (4.2.4.). Section 4.2.5. comments on some relevant differences between English, Dutch and French.

With the aid of the theoretical framework outlined in 4.2., we return to open (4.3.1.) and hypothetical conditionals (4.3.2.). In 4.3.3. some attention is paid to if-clauses containing modal verbs and 4.3.4. comments on the influence context can have on the interpretation of conditionals. Finally, 4.3.5. gives an overview of the different kinds of conditionals that can be distinguished on the basis of their lexical content.

4.1. Hypothetical conditionals and counterfactuality

4.1.1. Overview

The notions of hypotheticality and counterfactuality have already been briefly considered in section 1.4. There we saw that in the literature it is generally assumed that there is a connection between the hypotheticality of a conditional and the probability of the materialization of the content of the if-clause. More specifically, hypothetical conditionals are believed to express a negative epistemic stance on the part of the speaker. (cf Fillmore 1992; Dancygier 1993). According to Dancygier (1993: 409), the speaker "holds other assumptions which contradict the assumption given in p" (i.e. the content of the if-clause). The backshifted tense forms in
hypotheticals are used to signal the existence of such counterevidence to the hearer and the predictions in the conditional are made "in spite of knowledge to the contrary" (Dancygier 1993: 410), although it is acknowledged that in a hypothetical conditional like the one below, the possibility of rain cannot be excluded but is merely "an unlikely thing to happen".

(1) If it rained, the match would be cancelled

Comrie (1986) also defines hypotheticality in terms of the degree of probability of realization of the situations referred to in the conditional. In his hypotheticality continuum greater hypotheticality means lower probability and vice versa. Wierzbicka notes, however, that in natural language, the use of expressions such as probable, very probable, improbable, or very improbable does not correspond to the use of if-sentences like the following:

(2) If I were in your shoes, I would go

which "does not translate into a combination of 'It is very improbable that I am you' and something else" (Wierzbicka 1997: 36).

There are similar problems at the other end of the scale. Comrie claims that a factual sentence represents the lowest degree of hypotheticality but Wierzbicka (1997: 36) points out that a factual sentence like Paris is the capital of France is simply not hypothetical at all. Nieuwint shares this view that there is no such thing as a "scale on which the real world gradually shades off into an imaginary one" (Nieuwint 1992: 157). Like Wierzbicka and Nieuwint, I will assume that there is no sliding scale of hypotheticality. The term hypothetical conditional is understood to mean that the conditional contains backshifted verb forms. Speakers indicate that they abstract from reality and are talking about an imaginary situation. The fact that a speaker overtly indicates that (s)he chooses to abstract from reality does not necessarily imply that (s)he considers the situation in the if-clause impossible or even highly unlikely.

As we have seen in section 1.4., there is no direct correspondence between hypotheticality and probability in the sense that the hypothesis in a hypothetical conditional has to be necessarily highly improbable in the real world, nor is it the case that open conditionals are necessarily more likely to materialize in the real world. Nevertheless, we are still faced with the fact that many hypothetical conditionals, like the one in (2) above receive a counterfactual interpretation: I am not in your shoes.

According to Comrie there are two candidates for counterfactuals in English: non-past and past hypotheticals. He uses the following example to rule out the former1:

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1 According to Comrie, among others, past hypotheticals are ruled out too (see Chapter 1, section 4)
A REVISED APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONALS

(3) A: Will you buy me a beer?
B: If you gave me a kiss, I’d buy you a beer (Comrie 1986: 89)

Here it is not the case that B “holds other assumptions which contradict the assumption given in p’, which is what Dancygier would predict. In other words, the speaker does not want to imply that you will not give me a kiss. Fleischman (1989) gives the following examples to support her claim that non-past hypotheticality correlates with improbable (4a) and past with impossible (4b):

(4a) If I had time, I would write to you (non-past)
(4b) If I had had time, I would have written to you (past)

Past hypotheticals like the ones in (4b) generally get a counterfactual interpretation (I did not have time and I did not write to you) because they are hypotheses about alternative pasts. With English non-past hypothetical conditionals the situation seems less clear-cut. In the literature we both encounter examples on the basis of which it is claimed that they are “merely” unlikely (1 and 3) and examples like (2) and (4a) which suggest that some non-past hypotheticals are contrary to fact.

4.1.2. Is Dutch different?
According to Nieuwint, the vagueness with respect to the interpretation of non-past hypotheticals is not an issue in Dutch, since speakers of Dutch can mark counterfactuality grammatically. As we have seen, both the if-clause and the main clause can contain either a preterite or the would-equivalent zou(den) + infinitive. Nieuwint claims that by using the preterite, a speaker can implicitly deny the truth of the proposition expressed whereas the use of zou(den) + infinitive is neutral with respect to the (im)possibility of the content of the conditional. Examples (40a) and (40b) in section 2.2.3., here repeated as (5a) and (5b), were given to illustrate this difference (the English glosses will reflect the verb forms used in Dutch even where it results in ungrammatical sentences):

(5a) Als dat zou kunnen,...
‘If that would be possible,...’
(5b) Als dat kon,...
‘If that were possible,...’ (Nieuwint, 1992: 32)

Since (5b) contains a preterite, the speaker “indicates that he is talking about an impossibility” while “a speaker who utters (5a) indicates that he does not know whether whatever is referred to by the subject is possible, but that he hopes it can be realized” (Nieuwint 1992: 32). Nieuwint further elaborates this idea by adding that the zou(den) forms are used to talk about the hypothetical now, without the event or situation having been verified and without the speaker paying any attention to the state of affairs in the real world, as in (6) and (7): (Nieuwint 1992: 45-46):
Als je dat zou doen, zou ik je nooit meer aankijken
‘If you would do that, I would never speak to you again’

Als dat zou kunnen, zou ik met het vliegtuig gaan
‘If that would be possible, I would go by plane’

The preterite, on the other hand, is assigned two functions:

I. It allows speakers to state that they know the proposition is not valid at the moment of speaking, not now as in (8):

Als hij van je hield, zou hij vaker met je uitgaan (not now)
(Nieuwint 1992: 46)
‘If he loved you, he would take you out more often’

II. Whenever this is shared knowledge, the speaker can abstract away from time and describe an event or situation that does not obtain at the moment of speaking, making it into a counterfactual statement applying to any other time but now as in (9).

Als we wat meer armsglag kregen, zou dat heel prettig zijn (any time)
(Nieuwint 1992: 47)
‘If we got some more elbow room, that would be great’

In (8), the speaker denies that the he in question loves the hearer at the moment of speaking. In (9), the speaker knows they are not getting enough elbow room at the moment of speaking so the whole sentence applies to any time. According to Nieuwint, this example should be labelled irrealis (counterfactual) because the speaker uses the preterite to indicate (s)he is talking about an impossibility. Without context, however, there is really no way of telling whether the speaker considers it possible or impossible that they will get plenty of room in the (near) future. The fact that it is obvious that they do not have any now does not make the conditional counterfactual either since this would imply that every (hypothetical) conditional with future time reference could be labelled counterfactual.

The same applies to (10), which Nieuwint lists under “odd or unacceptable sentences” for no apparent reason:

Als iemand me f 100,- gaf, zou ik heel dankbaar zijn (Nieuwint 1992: 47)
‘If someone gave me 100 guilders, I would be very grateful’

Obviously, nobody is giving the speaker 100 guilders at the moment of speaking but this cannot make the utterance counterfactual in the sense that the speaker wants to imply (s)he knows (s)he will definitely not get any money. In effect, the differences between (6), (9) and (10) can only be slight (if there are any differences at all), since the result of abstracting away from time to describe an event or situation that does
not obtain at the moment of speaking (9) and (10) is very hard to distinguish from describing a hypothetical event like (6), especially when no contexts are given.

This lack of context makes many of Nieuwint’s arguments difficult to test. There is, for example, no way of telling whether a person uttering (7) knows or does not know if it is possible to go by plane, and there is no reason why this hypothetical conditional cannot, in certain contexts, be used to deny the truth of the proposition. In other words, a speaker may express counterfactuality using only zou(den). Moreover, the subtle differences in meaning which are assigned to the zou(den) forms and the preterite are ultimately based on differences in level of acceptability (as perceived by the author), which arise when one form is replaced by the other. This subjective approach is problematical. Native speakers may very well disagree about hypothetical sentences rated as “leaves one with a slightly uncomfortable feeling”, “has a more natural ring” or “very odd indeed” (Nieuwint, 1992) (see section 5.7.).

As mentioned before, in certain cases it is useful or even necessary to look at the context in order to be able to decide whether a hypothetical conditional is contrary to fact or not. Consider these examples from a large corpus of Dutch hypothetical conditionals:

(11) Maar als ik dat zou kunnen doen, meneer Brouwers, dan zou ik dat graag doen, maar ik kan het niet (Radio 3 interview)
   ‘But if I would be able to do that, Mr. Brouwers, I would like to do it but I can’t’
(12) Ik geloof heel sterk dat als je alles van jezelf in iets stopt, je nog eens voor grote verrassingen komt te staan. Ik hoop alleen maar naar mezelf te kijken.
   Want als ik dat niet zou geloven, had ik nooit de moed gehad om te doen wat ik nu doe (Viva magazine, 1984)
   ‘I firmly believe that if you give yourself completely to something, sooner or later you will be greatly surprised. All I have to do is look at myself. Because if I would not believe that, I had never had the courage to do what I am doing now’

The speaker in (11) uses a periphrastic conditional (zou(den) + inf.) twice, even though (s)he obviously knows that (s)he is talking about an impossibility and that there is no hope it can be realized, i.e. the situation has been verified. In (12), the counterfactuality of the if-clause is not only clear from the context (I firmly believe that - if I didn’t believe that) but also from the fact that the if-clause containing zou(den) + inf. is combined with a main clause containing a pluperfect. Apparently zou(den) + inf. can be used to deny a proposition thereby giving the hypothetical conditional a counterfactual meaning. This view is also adopted by Kellerman (1989), who, although adopting the position that the use of the preterite indicates counterfactuality, adds: “counterfactuality is not part of the meaning of periphrastic

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2 The Dutch corpus consists of over a thousand hypothetical conditionals drawn from newspapers, magazines, conversations, TV, etc. and a detailed account of its investigation is given in Chapter 5.
conditional tenses, though it may be interpreted by the listener as such in the appropriate context" (Kellerman 1989: 93).

To make matters even more complicated, the following examples from the corpus show that the preterite may be used in hypothetical if-clauses with (explicit) future reference:

(13) Ik hoop dat nog te bereiken door wekelijkse trainingen en oefenwedstrijden, want het zou treurig zijn als we volgende week in Pakistan laatste werden (Arnhemsche Courant, Oct. 1984)

‘I’m hoping to achieve this by weekly practice and training matches because it would be sad if we came last in Pakistan next week’

In (13), the hockey coach does not make a categorical statement concerning any time, nor can he be said to be talking about an impossibility i.e. he cannot add *...but we will definitely not come last unless he wants to boast or boost morale.

If Dutch lacks the ability to mark a hypothetical conditional as counterfactual by using the preterite, there must be other reasons why some Dutch (and English) conditionals are contrary to fact and others are not.

4.1.3. Introducing a revised account

Usually, (English) hypothetical conditionals are subdivided into two categories on the basis of the verb forms they contain: past and non-past. The term counterfactual is usually applied to those hypotheticals that have past time reference but it is sometimes also applied to non-past hypothetical conditionals as these are believed to be “used to refer to events about which the speaker expressed some kind of negative belief” (Palmer 1986: 189). Quirk et al. (1985) also claim that by using a hypothetical conditional a speaker conveys his or her belief that the condition will not be fulfilled. According to Comrie, counterfactuality is solely a matter of pragmatics: “...counterfactuality should be a stronger implicature with conditionals that have past time reference than with those that have future time reference, with those with present time reference occupying an intermediate position” (Comrie 1986: 90). Palmer (1986: 191) notes that a distinction is often made between ‘improbable’ conditions in the future and ‘impossible’ or ‘counterfactual’ ones in the present or past (...) if it is assumed that the future is unknown (...)."

But when exactly are we dealing with a proposition that has future time reference or present time reference? Consider the difference between (14) and (15) below.

(14a) If I fell ill...
(14b) If I fall ill...
(15a) If I knew
(15b) ?If I know...

It is clear that neither (14a) nor (14b) will get a counterfactual interpretation.
Without context we can establish that the speaker is not ill yet, but may fall ill in the future even though no adverbial of (future) time has been added. Conversely, (15) does get a counterfactual interpretation:

(14c)  If I fell ill, and (but) I will not
(15c)  If I knew, and (but) I do not know

What makes a verb like fall crucially different from a verb like know is a difference in boundary characteristics. It has been hinted in the literature that if-clauses containing states behave differently from those containing verbs denoting events (Dancygier 1993: 410). Leech (1971: 114) notes that were to cannot be used in conditional clauses with a state verb as in If you knew/* were to know Spanish, you might get a better job, and Wald (1993) notes that the non-standard use of would in if-clauses he observed in American English seems to be confined to non-stative contexts like that in (14).

Fillmore (1992) also pays some attention to the difference between if-clauses containing what he calls static and dynamic predicates. His examples with static predicates are labelled counterfactual, while those with dynamic predicates are supposed to be counter to expectation. Independently, it was shown in Schouten (1995) that conditionals with an event verb in the if-clause behave differently from if-clauses containing states. From example (14) it is clear that a hypothetical conditional with future time reference can easily be replaced by an open future predictive. The only difference between (14a) and (14b) is that the speaker in (14a) overtly indicates (s)he abstracts from reality and is talking about an imaginary future event. It could well be that (s)he considers any future illness very unlikely but this does not have to be the case. Replacing the backshifted verb form by a present tense in (15b) changes the meaning of the conditional dramatically. (15b) can only be interpreted as meaning something like As soon as I know or a non-predictive conditional with present time reference: if (you say that) it is true that I know....

There is another “test” that can be used to demonstrate that these two kinds of conditionals behave differently as a result of their inherent temporal characteristics.

(14d)  If I fell ill, I would have gone to the doctor’s
(15d)  If I knew, I would have told you

A hypothetical if-clause like (14d) has future time reference (I will or will not fall ill) and as a result cannot be combined with a main clause marked by a perfect conditional signalling counterfactuality. As in (15d) the if-clause with present time reference is interpreted as counterfactual to begin with (I do not know), this is not a problem.

On the basis of these differences, it is claimed that hypothetical conditionals with present time reference do not “take up an intermediate position” as was

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(14a) may be used to mean if it’s true that I fell ill but then it is a non-predictive conditional with past time reference rather than a hypothetical conditional clause with past time reference.
claimed by Comrie (1986: 90) but are counterfactual. Just like statements about alternative pasts, statements about alternative presents normally get a contrary to fact interpretation. A dichotomy between non-past and past is inadequate when it comes to the form-meaning relations of hypothetical conditionals. Instead a three-way division between past, present and future hypotheticals is proposed.

We have seen that events behave differently from states. However, this distinction is insufficiently clear to determine what constitutes an event and what makes something a state. The majority of verbs can actually behave like a state in one case *Pete weighs hundred and forty pounds* (intransitive weigh) but like an event in another *My mother weighs the tomatoes* (transitive weigh). In the sections that follow, we will see that in order to “work with” the tripartite division future, present, past if-clauses, we need to find a way to establish the interaction between inherent temporal characteristics of the proposition in the if-clause, the time frame the speaker has under consideration and the time of utterance.

4.2. Time and tense

4.2.1. Introduction

The basic assumption underlying most of the available work on tense is that it is used by speakers to locate situations (events, states, processes) in time. In other words, tense “grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero point of the deictic context” (Lyons 1977: 68). This temporal zero point is usually the moment of speech and by use of the past tense, it is assumed that a speaker locates a situation prior to the moment of speaking, while a future tense indicates that the situation is located after the present moment. Finally, the present tense indicates that the time of the situation is concurrent with the utterance time.

As Comrie observed, the use of the present tense, for instance, by no means excludes the possibility that the situation described already existed before the moment of speaking. Similarly, an utterance in the past tense like (16)

(16) John was eating his lunch (when I looked into his room)

“says nothing about whether the situation still continues at the present moment or not” (Comrie 1985: 42). It is for this reason that in Klein (1994) the idea that tense serves to localise the situation in relation to the time of utterance is abandoned.

Klein points out that the speaker who uses a past tense as in (16), does not indicate that the situation of John’s eating lunch lies before the moment of speaking but that the speaker makes a claim that at some time in the past John was eating lunch. In (16), this time in the past is short and specified fairly precisely, that is, it is the time when I looked into his room. The time that is being talked about in conversation can be fixed, for example by asking a question like *What did you do yesterday after lunch?*, but of course, one can also make a statement which is not a
reaction to an explicit question. In Klein and von Stutterheim (1987), it is argued that even without an explicit question having been asked, a declarative utterance is still the answer to some abstract question, the *Quaestio*. It is the temporal component of this abstract question, the *when?*, on which the following analysis of tense is based.

4.2.2. Klein’s analysis of tense
In order to be able to distinguish between the time of the situation and the specific time in the past for which a claim is made, Klein (1994) introduced the notion of topic time (TT). The time of the situation (TSit) in (16) above is the time at which John was eating lunch. It is the time of the lexical content of the utterance, represented by <John eat lunch>. The topic time (TT) of the utterance is simply the time for which the claim <John eat lunch> is made. (17) and (18) are further examples which indicate that the topic time and the time of the situation should be regarded as two different concepts. TSit in (17), i.e. the time of *his being dead* is not restricted to the past. He is still dead at the time of utterance but a distinction has to be made between the time at which he is dead and the time for which the claim *he was dead* is made. Then it becomes clear that tense expresses the relation between the time of utterance and the topic time, the time for which the speaker wants to assert the lexical content <he be dead>.

(17) They found John in the bathtub. He was dead. (Klein 1994: 22)

The speaker in (17) is talking about the time when they found John in the bathtub and since this topic time precedes the moment of speaking, a past tense is appropriate in both sentences. Similarly, if someone is about to leave home and return later, the following sequence makes perfect sense:

(18) A: Will you be here at eight?
B: Yes, I will be here (Klein 1994: 23)

The situation described by the lexical content <you be here> does not come into existence after the time of utterance even though a future tense is used. A does not want to indicate that the situation of his (or her) being here is after the time of utterance (TU) because B is already here at TU. The future tense is used because the claim is made for some time in the future. Again the topic time is “the time span to which the speaker’s claim on this occasion is confined” (Klein 1994: 4) and since this is after TU, the future tense is used. This distinction between the time which goes with the finite component of the utterance (FIN-time) and the time which goes with the non-finite component (INF-time) is central to Klein’s approach. The finite component contains the assertion (ASS) and the localisation of the topic time. Tense is nothing more than the relation between the topic time (TT) and the time of utterance (TU). The topic time can precede, follow or include the time of utterance. The topic time can be restricted to a short time interval, as in (18) above, where the
explicit question narrows down the time to be talked about, to roughly eight o’clock. It can also be much less restricted as in e.g. *Have you ever been to London?, where it is one’s entire past, or not limited at all, as in *two plus two is four. In this last example, the present tense is used since the time of utterance is necessarily included in the topic time.

In English, three tenses are distinguished, namely past tense (TT before TU), present tense (TT includes TU) and future tense (TT after TU). Note that TU cannot be partly included in TT. It is either fully included in TT, follows TT or precedes TT. This relation between TU and TT is viewed as being disconnected from the different aspects like progressive and perfective, which are the topic of the next section.

4.2.3. Klein’s analysis of aspect

Most speakers of English will agree that a verb like resemble cannot usually occur in the progressive (-ing form), just as they know that an utterance like *he won for an hour does not make any sense, while an utterance like he swam for an hour sounds perfectly natural. Thus people are aware that verbs differ with respect to lexical aspect (their inherent temporal properties) and that it influences the choice of grammatical aspect, which is defined by Klein as follows:

A language may have various ways of presenting the time course of a situation, independent of which position in time this situation occupies; these ways are called aspects (Klein 1994: 27).

Before entering upon the subject of aspect, we should first have a look at what different kinds of verbs we can, or rather, need to distinguish. Differences in behaviour between verbs with different temporal characteristics have been the basis for verb categories like events, processes, states, achievements (e.g. Vendler 1967), where oppositions like punctual versus durative, dynamic versus stative, telic versus atelic etc. are distinguished in various combinations and on various grounds. Classifying verbs in isolation, i.e. detached from their arguments or adverbials, however, is a hazardous undertaking. After all, there are many elements which help determine the temporal characteristics of lexical content as a whole. Lexical content like <Pete sit on a couch> has different temporal features from <Pete sit down on a couch>, and <Mary walk> behaves differently from <Mary walk the dog>. In view of the fact that most verbs cannot easily be assigned to a unique category, Klein applies his analysis to full verb phrases. He distinguishes three types of situation descriptions which differ with respect to their behaviour towards (possible) topic times.

Some situations do not involve any TT contrast at all, meaning that every topic time we can think of falls within the time of the situation. Klein mentions as an example the situation of a book being in Russian. Since being in Russian is a permanent property of certain books, it holds for all possible topic times, in other words; there is no TT at which the book is not (yet) or no longer in Russian. Lexical
contents like these are called 0-state and they extend over the entire time so that TT is always included in TSit. With these verbs, the difference between topic time and time of situation is particularly obvious.

(19) There was a book on the table. It was in Russian (Klein 1994: 4)

These two utterances are presented as being the answer to a question asked by a judge to a witness *What did you notice when you looked into the room?*. This question establishes the topic time about which the witness is supposed to talk and it clearly precedes TU. The book’s being in Russian is, however, not restricted to the topic time at all. The situation of it being in Russian (still) exists at the time of utterance but *There was a book on the table.* *It is in Russian* would be ungrammatical simply because the witness is not talking about what is going on now.

A second type of situation description typically does have a beginning or an end. As a result, there are possible TTs preceding and following TSit. In other words, they have what Klein calls a pretime and a posttime. Examples of these so-called 1-state contents are <Mary sleep> or <Peter live in London> (see 21 below).

A third type not only allows an outside contrast but an inside contrast between possible TTs as well, e.g. <Mary leave the room>. lexical contents like these have two qualitatively distinct states or, more particularly, they include both a state and its negative counterpart in a single lexical content, in this case *Mary inside the room* and *Mary outside the room* respectively. The topic time of an utterance may fall into the source state, into the target state or it may include (part of) both states.

Following Klein (1994), I will illustrate the various alternatives as follows: ----- ---- represents the source state (SS), +++++++ the target state (TS) and [ ] the topic time:

(20a) Mary was/is/will be leaving the room

[----]-------+++++

(20b) Mary had/has/will have left the room

--------++[+++]++

(20c) Mary left/leaves/will leave the room

--------[---++]+++++

Note that <Mary leave> can be hooked up to a topic time which precedes, follows or includes TU. Note also that TU itself is not represented in the diagrams; 20a, b and c differ only with respect to aspect.

In (20a), the topic time falls into the source state, meaning that Mary is still inside the room during the whole of the topic time. In English this is morphologically marked by means of the progressive aspect (auxiliary *be* + -ing). In (20b), Mary is already outside the room at the point in time we are talking about, which is indicated by means of perfective aspect (auxiliary *have* + -ed participle). In (20c), part of both states are included in the topic time, meaning that during the time
under consideration (TT), the transition from source state to target state was/is/will be made. No further information is included in this message. From (20c) alone we cannot conclude anything about e.g. how long it takes Mary to leave the room, that is, whether the transition is punctual or should be considered an activity or an achievement. (see also below).

As is clear from the above, temporal characteristics of lexical contents are inextricably bound up with the way topic time can be linked to the time of the situation. 0-state contents, for instance, cannot have perfect aspect since this aspect means that the topic time follows the time of the situation (or the source state of TSit as in (20b). This is why *the book has/had/will have been in Russian is odd and Peter has/had/will have slept is not. One can refer to the time following the time of the situation <Peter sleep> but one cannot refer to the time following the situation <book be in Russian>.

The idea that there are only three kinds of situation descriptions, namely 0-state, 1-state and 2-state, may seem strange in the light of the many more refined classifications that have been proposed. We have to keep in mind, however, that in Klein's analysis:

> the single basic criterion from which (...) everything necessary for the analysis of tense and aspect follows (...) is the behaviour of a lexical content with regard to its linking to some topic time. What happens when the lexical content is associated with some specific time about which, on some occasion, an assertion is made in an utterance? (Klein 1994: 80)

In order for a lexical content to be 2-state, all we have to decide is whether it has an inside contrast between possible TTs or not: At some possible TTs Mary is in the room (e.g. 20a) and at other possible TTs Mary is outside the room (e.g. 20b) and in (20c), we have a TT in which part of both states is included. Of course these lexical contents have outside contrast as well, meaning that a topic time may precede the source state or follow the target state. What happens, then, if we want to apply the same analysis to a 1-state content? The topic time in (20b), which is situated in the posttime of the source state, is the target state of Mary's leaving the room. When the topic time precedes TU, a past perfect is used, and the utterance is interpreted as at some point in the past, Mary was in the target state of leaving the room. The same goes for 1-state contents like in (21):

> (21) Mary has/had/will have slept

In (21), the perfect indicates that at some point in the past/present or future, Mary is/was/will be in the posttime of sleeping. Again we cannot tell from the diagram alone whether TT precedes, includes or is after TU; in other words only aspect is represented here.
Whenever TSit is interpreted as excluding TT (abbreviated TT ex TSit), this means TT follows the time of the situation as in (20b) and (21), or it can also precede it. English, like many other languages, has a separate construction which indicates that the topic time precedes the source state of a 2-state content and the only state of a 1-state content. This is to be going to, a construction described by Klein as prospective aspect (also known as the periphrastic future). The difference between a periphrastic future and an ordinary future tense can be explained by means of Klein’s analysis. Picture the following situation: Two people are in a room. Person B gets up and walks away (towards the window) and the following exchange takes place:

(22) A: What are you doing?  TT incl TU
    B: I'm going to open the window  TT incl TU
        [ TU ]  ------------++++++

    *I will open the window  TT after TU
        TU  -------[--+++]+++++

By asking What are you doing?, speaker A introduces a topic time which includes TU and therefore a present progressive is used: What are you doing as we speak. Speaker B answers in the present tense (I am going to...4), even though the 2-state situation of B’s opening the window follows the topic time as well as the time of utterance included in this topic time. I will open the window sounds odd in this context, since the future tense does not so much require that the situation follows TU but that the topic time follows TU.

The topic time A introduces includes his/her TU and technically this topic time has to be different from the moment of speech that B’s utterance refers to by using the present tense. In practice, speakers deal with this by assuming that as soon as B starts his/her turn in the conversation, TU, the now, also shifts.

4.2.4. Temporal adverbials
The tense marking of the finite component of an utterance (FIN) only indicates whether the topic time precedes, follows or includes the time of utterance. This is, of course, not very specific. There are a number of ways in which the TT can be narrowed down. The adverbial clause yesterday at ten in (23) below, is an example of a deictic expression, related to the time of utterance. A calendaric anchoring point is not fixed in relation to the time of utterance e.g. On the 1st of November 1967 Mr Smith died. In the case of anaphoric maintenance, the topic time is clear from the preceding context, either within or across utterances (as in 17 and 22).

---[Person B could also regard his/her walking towards the window as part of the source state of his/her opening the window. In other words, (s)he could use the present progressive:
B: I'm opening the window  TT incl TU
        ----[-TU]-+++++++]
The use of a temporal adverbial like the one in (23) below “narrows TT to a certain time span and does so in contrast to some other time span, for which the same claim could be made” (Klein 1994: 164-165)

(23) Yesterday at ten, Chris was in Heidelberg (Klein 1994: 163)

As the temporal adverbial yesterday at ten specifies the topic time, it is called FIN specification.

Temporal adverbials may, however, also serve to specify the non-finite lexical content of the utterance (INF specification). Compare (24) and (25):

(24) At ten, he had left
(25) He had left at ten (Klein 1994: 163)

In the first example, at ten specifies TT. This topic time precedes TU so a past tense is used. All it means is that at ten, he was in the posttime of leaving and we cannot tell when exactly the leaving itself (i.e. TSit) took place. When a temporal adverbial occurs initially, it often has this function.

In the second example, at ten specifies TSit. The temporal adverbial in this case enriches the non-finite lexical content <he leave at ten>, which in turn is linked to a TT before TU. This time, we do know when the leaving took place, namely at ten. An utterance like (26) then, is ambiguous between these two readings:

(26) Chris had left Heidelberg yesterday (Klein 1994: 161)

Usually this utterance is taken to mean that the leaving took place yesterday. The temporal adverbial is not part of the topic, i.e. it does not specify the time when Chris was in the posttime of leaving but it specifies the time at which Chris left. In other words, the temporal adverbial is added to the lexical content <Chris leave Heidelberg yesterday> before the posttime marker had is added. The temporal adverbial is stressed and the utterance is no longer ambiguous. Klein illustrates this reading by giving the following example: “I could not find her this morning in her hotel. She had left Heidelberg yesterday” (Klein 1994: 161). The topic time precedes TU (this morning) and the temporal adverbial specifies TSit (INF specification). When the temporal adverbial in (26) is part of the topic of the utterance, yesterday specifies the time at which Chris was in the posttime of leaving. When the leaving itself occurred is not clear.

4.2.5. A brief comparison of English, Dutch and French
A major difference between English, Dutch and French is the lack of progressive aspect in the latter two. The progressive is not grammaticalized in Dutch (28a-d) and French (29a-b) as it is in English. Instead progressiveness is described by means of various kinds of periphrastic constructions or not marked at all:
(27) What is he doing?
(27a) He is writing a letter

Dutch:
(28a) Hij schrijft een brief
He writes a letter
(28b) Hij is een brief aan het schrijven
He is a letter at the writing
(28c) Hij zit een brief te schrijven
He sits a letter to write
(28d) Hij is bezig een brief te schrijven
He is occupied a letter to write

French:
(29a) Il écrit une lettre
He writes a letter
(29b) Il est en train d’écrire une lettre
He is in process of write a letter

---[TU]---+++++++---

In Dutch the simple form can be used (28a). (28b) is an example of a very productive Dutch construction, (28c) and (28d) contain an auxiliary and a construction with an adverbial (busy) respectively. In French either the simple form is used, or être en train de ...

An important difference between English and French on the one hand and Dutch on the other is the form and use of the future tense. In English and French the future tense is generally used, whenever TT follows TU. In French the futur is marked as an inflection on the verb, while in English will is used as an auxiliary of future tense.

In Dutch, the situation is more complicated. The auxiliary zullen, like English shall, was originally a modal verb denoting obligation. It has never fully developed into an auxiliary of future tense though it can be used as such in certain cases and it often has an additional modal meaning next to indicating futurity. Example (30) can have two different meanings, as in English, the first of which requires a future tense and the second a present tense:

(30) Hij zal ziek zijn
He will ill be
(30a) ‘He will be ill’
(30b) ‘He is probably ill’

According to Dutch grammars, zullen is a cross between an auxiliary of the future
tense and a modal auxiliary.\footnote{See section 2.2.2, note 15.}

The most common tense used in utterances where TT follows TU, however, is the present tense.

Deze tijdsverhouding kan ook door het futurum uitgedrukt worden. In het feitelijke taalgebruik, althans in Nederland en vooral in gesproken taal, gebeurt dit echter vaker door het presens. Voorwaarde is wel dat uit de context en/of situatie blijkt dat de werking in de toekomst zal plaatsvinden (Haeseryn et al., 1997: 120).

‘This time frame [i.e. TT after TU, E.S.] can also be expressed by the future tense. In actual language use, at least in the Netherlands and especially in spoken language, this is more often done by means of the present tense. This can only be done on condition that it is clear from the context and/or situation that the situation will take place in the future.’

In the light of this rule of Dutch, it is interesting to compare the following pair of utterances:

\begin{tabular}{l}
(31) & Hans komt \\
     & Hans comes \\
(32) & Hans slaapt \\
     & Hans sleeps \\
\end{tabular}

In isolation, the first utterance is interpreted as ‘Hans will come’ (TT after TU) while the second one means ‘Hans is sleeping’ (TT incl TU). The decisive difference between a and b is the fact that <Hans come> is a 2-state situation whereas <Hans sleep> is 1-state. If we now remember that Dutch does not mark progressive aspect we could also translate (31) as ‘Hans is coming’. In (31), TT is included in the source state. Even though it is clear with the English present progressive that TT includes TU (is coming), it is no less clear that Hans is not here yet. In other words, the target state lies in the future while the sleeping in (32) is taking place now. In Dutch this same distinction makes it possible to refer to a TT after TU by means of a present tense. After all, both ‘Hans is coming’ and ‘Hans will come’ end up as Hans komt.

Below are some more examples which show that when TT includes TU (33), English uses a present progressive where Dutch and French use a simple present tense and when TT follows TU (34), English and French use the future tense while in Dutch a simple present tense is again used.

\begin{tabular}{l}
(33) & Is Hans coming to the party? \\
(33a) & Yes, he is coming to my party \\
\end{tabular}
A REVISED APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONALS

(33b) Ja, hij \textit{komt} op mijn feestje
Yes he comes to my party

(33c) Oui il \textit{vient} à ma fête
Yes he comes to my party

-----[-TU-]-----+++++++

(34a) Tomorrow, John \textit{will come} to the party
(34b) John \textit{komt} morgen op mijn feest
John comes tomorrow to the party

(34c) John \textit{viendra} demain à la fête
John \textit{will come} tomorrow to the party

TU ------[-----++]+++++

Naturally these are by no means the only differences between the tense systems and their uses, nor is the description of tense and aspect in the above sections exhaustive. They serve as a background for the rest of the chapter, in which we will return to conditional sentences.

4.3. Back to conditionals

4.3.1. Open conditionals
In the previous sections, we have seen that the topic time is the time span for which the speaker wants to assert the lexical content. The finite component FIN of an utterance contains two elements: the assertion (ASS) and the localisation of TT, the time span for which the claim is made. In Chapter 1, however, we saw that in conditional sentences (If $p$, $q$) neither $p$ nor $q$, i.e. neither the content of the \textit{if}-clause, nor that of the main clause are asserted. In an open future predictive conditional like:

(35) If I win the lottery, I will buy a car

the subordinator \textit{if} acts as an operator on the finite component (FIN) (the non-finite component INF is unaffected). As a result, the embedded assertions in both clauses are suspended. Furthermore it was shown in section 1.1. that a causal or logical relation between the \textit{if}-clause and the main clause is implied in natural language. The winning of the lottery will cause the speaker to buy a car. Since a cause tends to precede its effect, the possible topic time for the main clause cannot precede the TT of the \textit{if}-clause:
(36) Future predictive conditionals
If-clause FIN⁶ (ASS -suspended-, TT after TU)
main clause FIN (ASS-suspended-, TT after TU) and TT simultaneous with or after TT if-clause

In future predictives, TT is situated after TU: *I have not won the lottery yet and I may or may not win it in future.* <i>I win the lottery</i> is a 2-state content, which is often the case with future predictives since speakers may use a conditional of this type to discuss the cause and effect of a certain possible event, i.e. a situation involving a change of states.

Apart from the restrictions under (36), TT can be limitless, as in (35), which could mean something like *if I ever win the lottery,* but TT may also be anaphorically given. In a conversation on next Friday’s lottery draw, the topic time of (35) can be limited to the time span of that draw only. In addition, a temporal adverbial may be used to introduce a new TT: *If I win the lottery next Friday...* The same applies to the main clause. It has to follow the if-clause in time but can also get its own specification: *...I’ll buy a car next Saturday.*

A future predictive if-clause does not have to contain a 2-state lexical content. Speakers may want to discuss a possible 1-state situation, for which the suspended assertion applies to some future TT. Compare the if-clauses of (37a, b, c):⁷

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(37a)</th>
<th>If I win the lottery, (I’ll buy a car)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>------[---++]+++++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(37b)</th>
<th>If the book is in Russian, (we will buy it)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>........[---]--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(37c)</th>
<th>If he knows the answer (he will tell us)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>------[---]--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In (35), as in (37), the topic time follows the time of utterance. It needs to be clear from the context, however, that TT is situated after TU. The difference between

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⁶ Klein distinguishes between FIN* and INF* on an abstract level, indicated by an asterisk, realised as FIN and INF on the surface level. As the present study only deals with the semantic description of the surface realisations of conditional sentences, we will dispense with the asterisks for reasons of readability.

⁷ The examples all have simple aspect. If-clauses may also contain verbs with perfect or progressive aspect:

  If in two years time he still hasn’t found a job, he’ll move back to England
  TU ------++++ [ ]
  If he’s watching TV, we will leave
  TU ------[--]----

In the first example we see that the contrast between 2-state and 1/0-state contents disappears. They behave like 1-state verbs because the transition from one state to another does not fall within the limits of the topic time.
(37a) on the one hand and (37b) and (37c) on the other is that the latter are interpreted as what could be called *turn out to...* conditionals. The only way the *if*-clauses can be interpreted as future predictives is something like *If the book turns out to be (2-state) in Russian / if it turns out that he knows the answer or if he finds out (2-state), he will tell us*. Compare the non-predictives in (38) below.

However, it is not the case that any future predictive *if*-clauses containing a 0/1-state verb is possible. A conditional like *if I am you...* is problematic since it is hard to imagine a future TT for which I may assert that I am (turn out to be) actually you. The book is in Russian (if we do not know this for certain, we can go and have a look and if it turns out to be in Russian, we’ll buy it).

Because of their inherent temporal characteristics, the *if*-clauses in (37b) and (37c) can also be used in a non-predictive conditional. In Chapter 2 we saw that predictives like (37) and non-predictives like (38) below differ with respect to their logical and temporal characteristics. In a non-predictive conditional the speaker does not make a prediction about a possible future situation but instead draws conclusions on the basis of something which is contextually given. The inferential relation between the two clauses is on the epistemic level. The present tense indicates that TT includes TU.

\[
\text{non-predictives: TT incl TU}
\]

(38a) If the book is in Russian (like you just said) I can’t read it

...[[-TU-]-----

(38b) If the windows are open (as we can see) it must have been too hot for him

[[-TU-]-----

In (37a) it is obvious that TT does not include or precede TU; I have not won the lottery yet and I am not winning it as we speak. There is no TT incl TU which also includes the transition from one state (not having won) to the other (having won), as shown in (39). As Dudman puts it “In hard cash, the difference is that there are present states but no present events” (Dudman 1994: 118), but in certain situations, e.g. sports commentaries like *He shoots [the ball]; he scores!* this would not be problematic.

(39) * [---TU++]+++++

Finally, since there is no causal link between the contents of the clauses, the restriction that the topic time of the main clause cannot precede that of the *if*-clause does not apply. Neither is it the case that TT has to be situated after TU.

(40a) If he said that, he lied

TT before TU TT before TU

---

8 In section 1.2. we saw that ”nonsense” sentences like *if you’re the Pope, I’m the Empress of China* are sometimes used by speakers to tell off their interlocutor(s) for making a ridiculous claim.
(40b) If you drank some milk straight out of the bottle, it will turn sour by tomorrow (Dancygier 1993: 425)

TT before TU \hspace{1cm} TT after TU

(40c) If he won’t be here before nine, we can order now

TT after TU \hspace{1cm} TT incl TU

The use of the tenses in (40) is the same as that in declarative utterances. In languages like English, Dutch and French, which have all but lost their past subjunctive markers, an if-clause like (40a) is ambiguous and can also function as a non-past hypothetical if-clause, as we will see in the next section.

4.3.2. Hypothetical conditionals

Speakers can use backshifted verb forms in conditionals to overtly indicate that they are speaking hypothetically. The example below is the hypothetical counterpart of (37a):

(41) If I won the lottery, (I would buy a car)

\hspace{1cm} TU \hspace{1cm} \text{	extbf{----[---+++]}+++++}

The if-clause has a 2-state content. The speaker has not won the lottery yet and may or may not win it in the (hypothetical) future. In other words, the situation is similar to that in (37a) and the rules given in (36) apply: TT is after TU, the assertions are suspended and the main clause cannot precede the if-clause in time.

(42) Hypothetical future predictive conditionals

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{If-clause} \hspace{1cm} \text{FIN (ASS -susp-, TT after TU)}
  \item \textbf{main clause} \hspace{1cm} \text{FIN (ASS -susp-, TT after TU) and TT simul or after TT}
  \item \textbf{if-clause}
\end{itemize}

The fact that open and hypothetical future predictives do not differ greatly is also noted by Wierzbicka. Her bilingual consultants, when asked to translate sentences like (37a) and (41) into their native language, asked “But what IS the difference, don’t they mean the same?” (Wierzbicka 1997: 50). This is not surprising if we take into consideration that open future predictives make predictions about possible (real) futures while hypotheticals like (41) are used to speculate on a hypothetical future.\footnote{Sometimes the term \textit{hypothetical} is also used for future predictive conditionals (e.g. Athanasiadou \\ \\ & Dirven 1997).}

Moreover, switches to and from hypothetical mode are not uncommon if we look at actual language use. In a large corpus of Dutch conditionals (see Chapter 5), there were many combinations of an open future predictive if-clause and a hypothetical main clause or vice versa to be found:

\footnote{Interestingly, a non-predictive conditional with future time reference requires the usually forbidden auxiliary \textit{will} in the if-clause: \textit{if it's true that he won't be here before nine} (see also section 3.1.3.).}
(43a) Als dat doorgaat, zou die opleiding in Duitsland niet meer erkend worden (conversation about polytechnics, November 1984)
‘If that goes through, the training in Germany would no longer be recognised’

(43b) Van een kale kip kan niet geplukt worden. Als we er nog meer schulden bijkrijgen, zou dat wel eens verstrekkende gevolgen kunnen hebben. (NRC Handelsblad, November 29 1985)
‘You cannot pluck a bald chicken. If we run up more debts, that would/could have far-reaching consequences’

The if-clauses in (41) and (43) have 2-state contents. Because of their different inherent temporal characteristics, 0 and 1 state contents, like the ones in (44) and (45), behave rather differently.

(44) If the book was in Russian, (we would buy it)
        ...-[TU]-

(45) If he knew the answer (he would tell us)
        -----[TU]----

In (44) we can add: “but it is not in Russian” and in (45) “but he doesn’t know the answer”. This unmarked interpretation for if-clauses containing 0/1-state verbs is that they are counterfactual. Like alternative presents, alternative presents are generally contrary to fact. The fact that some conditionals are counterfactual is because they are predictions about hypothetical (alternative) presents and pasts. The difference with the rules given in (38) is that here the assertions are not suspended, they are cancelled.

(46) If-clause    main clause
 FIN (ASS -cancelled-, TT incl TU) FIN (ASS -cancelled-, TT incl/after TU) and TT simul or after TT if-clause

With this in mind, Nieuwint’s examples in (6) and (8), are repeated below.

(47) Als hij van je hield, zou hij vaker met je uitgaan
‘If he loved you, he would take you out more often’

(48) Als je dat zou doen, zou ik je nooit meer aankijken
‘If you would do that, I would never speak to you again’

On the basis of these examples (among others), Nieuwint claims that in Dutch

---

Sometimes conditionals seem to show a reversal of time relations: if I was poor, John would have bought me a car last week but as the TT set up by the if-clause is hardly restricted at all: I am (not) a poor person, the TT of the main clause falls into the TT of the if-clause and does not totally precede it.

11
counterfactuality can be marked grammatically by means of the preterite. It is, however, not the use of the preterite in (47) which makes the conditional counterfactual but the fact that the if-clause has a 1-state proposition. TT includes TU (but he does not love you and does not take you out more often).

In (48), a counterfactual interpretation is ruled out, not because zouden + inf. is used but because the if-clause has future time reference and the speaker does not know whether or not you will or will not do that in future.

In both Dutch and English, then, the following guidelines apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(49)</th>
<th>tense forms</th>
<th>time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-past</td>
<td>TT after TU</td>
<td>hypothetical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-past</td>
<td>TT incl TU</td>
<td>hypothetical -&gt; counterfactual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>TT before TU</td>
<td>hypothetical -&gt; counterfactual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The division between past and non-past hypotheticals is of course based solely on the fact that non-past hypotheticals contain different tense forms from past hypotheticals. However, in sections 1.4. and 4.1.3. it was shown on the basis of evidence from Dutch, English, German and Norwegian that counterfactuals with present time reference may also contain a pluperfect and/or a perfect conditional.

In (44) and (45), we saw that the unmarked interpretation of an if-clause containing a 0/1-state lexical content is counterfactual. However, as was the case with future predictives, hypotheticals can also contain possible future 0/1-state contents. Compare (50a) and (50b) below.

(50a) If John had enough money, he would go to Mexico
     -----[-TU-]-----
(50b) If John had enough money next summer, he would go to Mexico
     TU -----[---]-----

Example (50a) is a hypothetical conditional with present time reference (TT incl TU) and as a result gets a counterfactual interpretation: John does not have enough money. In the second example, the speaker is talking about a TT after TU for which the assertion is suspended: John will or will not have enough money. As with the open conditionals, it has to be clear from the context that the TT under consideration is after the time of utterance.

Hypotheticals are not only used to reason about alternative futures and presents, people also like to consider matters that could, would, should or might have happened.

(51a) If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car
     -----[---++]+++++ TU
(51b) If he had known, he would have told us
     -----[---]----- TU
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(51c) If the book had been in Russian, we would have bought it

...-----[---]-----... TU

The difference between 0- and 1-state contents on the one hand and 2-state contents on the other is neutralized in (51). They are all interpreted as counterfactuals. It does not matter whether we are talking about a 0, 1 or 2-state situation which did not apply during some past TT.

(52) If-clause       FIN (ASS -cancelled-, TT bef/incl TU)
main clause        FIN (ASS -cancelled-, TT bef/incl TU) and TT simul or after TT if-clause

(52) above states that the topic time of the if-clause as well as that of the main clause can either precede or include TU. The first reason for this is that a pluperfect is ambiguous between a backshifted preterite (e.g. John opened the window) and a backshifted present perfect (e.g. John has opened the window).12

(53a) If John had opened the window...

-----[---+]++ TU

(53b) If John had opened the window

-----+++++++ [ TU ]

In (53a), the assertion (which is cancelled) is made for a topic time which includes transition from window not open to window open, whereas in (53b) the topic time is in the post time of the opening of the window (and the assertion again is cancelled). The second reason that a pluperfect can sometimes be used for a topic time which includes TU is that in languages like Dutch and to a lesser extent English and French, a pluperfect is becoming a counterfactuality marker regardless of the time frame (see section 1.4.)

Finally, an if-clause containing a pluperfect does not have to be counterfactual. It can be a non-predictive conditional of the type: if (it's true that) John had opened the window before Mary came in, she could have seen him leave.

4.3.3. Modals in if-clauses
So far we have assumed that a hypothetical if-clause containing a 2-state lexical content has future time reference. The Topic Time is after TU and the conditional does not receive a counterfactual interpretation because people in general do not know what the future will bring. The hypothetical if-clause can be changed into an open if-clause without changing the meaning dramatically. Whenever a modal verb like can or must occurs in a clause, the clause becomes ambiguous with respect to

---12 For some speakers it may even be possible to backshift a pluperfect:
If John had have opened the window before she came in. But in most cases where this intrusive have occurs it seems to be added to backshifted preterites (see section 2.1.5.2)
the localisation of the Topic Time. In

(54) John must take this pill tomorrow

it is not clear whether the adverbial specifies the time of the necessity: Tomorrow, John <must take this pill> or whether tomorrow specifies the time of the main verb: Now, John must <take this pill tomorrow>. The first reading would have TT after TU and the second reading TT incl TU. The same kind of ambiguity occurs in hypothetical if-clauses containing a modal verb. This will be illustrated by means of some Dutch examples (for reasons that will become clear below). The first example is fairly straightforward. The if-clause contains a 2-state content: <Paul cross this river> TT is after TU. The conditional is hypothetical: he may or may not do it in future.

(55) Als Paul deze rivier over zou steken,
    if Paul this river over would cross
    (zou hij hulp kunnen gaan halen)
    would he help can go get
    TU ------[---++]+++++
‘If Paul crossed this river, he would be able to get help’

An if-clause containing a modal is ambiguous (because it behaves like a 1-state content): <Paul kan deze rivier oversteken> ‘Paul can/is able to cross this river’. It is not clear whether Paul’s being able to cross applies before or after the time of utterance. Both a future hypothetical reading (55a) and a present counterfactual reading (55b) are possible.

In (55a), TT is again after TU and it is not clear whether or not he will be able to cross the river (and get help) in the future.

(55a) Als Paul deze rivier over zou kunnen steken
    if Paul this river over would can cross
    (zou hij hulp kunnen gaan halen)
    would he help can go get
    TU ------[---]-----
‘If Paul could cross this river, he would be able to get some help’

(55b) Als Paul deze rivier over zou kunnen steken,
    if Paul this river over would can cross
    (had hij dat al lang gedaan.)
    had he that already long done
    ------[-TU]------
‘If Paul were able to cross this river, he would have done it by now’

In Dutch there are many modal verbs like kunnen ‘can’, mogen ‘can/to be allowed’,
musten 'have to', willen 'want to' etc., where ambiguity often arises. If we take this into account and look back at example (11) Als ik dat zou kunnen doen 'if I could do that', it will become clear that it is exactly this kind of ambiguity which causes the speaker to add his comment: maar ik kan het niet 'but I can't'. In this case and in the cases dealt with in the next section, context plays an important role.

4.3.4. Conditionals in context
Looking at conditional sentences in isolation, which is what we have been doing mostly up till now, makes it possible to show important differences between if-clauses with 0/1-state contents and those with 2-state contents. In this section, however, it will become clear that the guidelines outlined above can sometimes be overruled in actual language use, particularly in Dutch. Take, for example, a future hypothetical if-clause with a 2-state lexical content like the one in (56a) below.

(56a) Als ik zou gaan, zou ik je meenemen
      if I would go would I you with take
      'If I went, I would take you with me'

Normally, such an if-clause cannot be combined with a main clause marked by a pluperfect/perfect conditional.

(56b) Als ik zou gaan, had ik je meegenomen
      if I would go, had I you with taken
      'If I went, I would have taken you with me'

Native speakers of Dutch may well find (56b) ungrammatical without context. If, however, we supply the following context, the "problem" seems to disappear.

(56c) Ik ga niet naar het feest vanavond. Jammer eh?
      I go not to the party tonight shame eh?
      'I am not going to the party tonight. Shame, eh?'

Als ik (wel) zou gaan, had ik je meegenomen.
If I indeed would go, had I you with taken
'If I was going, I would have taken you with me'

The difference between (56b) and (56c) is a difference in topic time. In (56a) and (56b), we automatically think of <ik gaan naar het feestje> 'I go to the party' as a 2-state content (which it is), and consequently place TT after TU. This is the unmarked interpretation, leaving open the question whether I will actually go or not. The if-clauses in (56a) and (56b) could be replaced by the open future predictive: als ik ga. Speakers (and hearers) feel that als ik zou gaan 'if I went', als ik ga 'if I go' cannot be combined with had ik je meegenomen 'I would have taken you with me' because such a main clause presupposes a counterfactual if-clause. In (56c), the topic time of my not going could be interpreted as including TU, which is clear
from the English translation: 'I am not going'. TT is fully included in the source state of the situation/ this topic time is maintained in the if-clause that follows. Again it is clear from the English translation that the if-clause is counterfactual and TT incl TU. Since Dutch lacks a marker for progressive aspect, both 'if I went' and 'if I was going' end up as als ik zou gaan.

Another case where a 2-state verb can be used in a counterfactual if-clause occurs when it has the meaning of a habitual. In isolation hearers would assume that the topic time of a 2-state if-clause like:

(57a) If I took the bus...
TU ------[---+++]++++++

is situated after TU. However, even with a seemingly clear case like (57a), it is not hard to come up with a context where the same if-clause is used as a counterfactual and where TT can include TU.

(57b) I always cycle to school
---++ ---++ [ TU ] ---++ ---++

If I took the bus, (it would take me a lot longer)
---++ ---++ [ TU ] ---++ ---++

In (57b), the going to school is a recurring 2-state content which behaves like a 1-state content where TT includes TU: 'I do not take the bus every day'.

4.3.5. An enumeration of the possibilities
Up to now the main focus has been on the form and meaning of the if-clauses. This section gives an overview of the possible combinations of the different kinds of lexical content in hypothetical if-clauses and main clauses, represented schematically in (58).

(58) if-clause main clause

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-state</td>
<td>1/0-state</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-state</td>
<td>2-state</td>
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<td>1/0-state</td>
<td>1/0-state</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/0-state</td>
<td>2-state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of these combinations, example sentences containing non-past and past forms are listed.

In the first type, a 2-state content occurs in the if-clause and as a result, the topic time follows the time of utterance (TT after TU) when non-past forms are used. When past forms are used, the topic time completely precedes the time of utterance (TT before TU); there is nothing in between. We have seen in sections 4.3.1. and
4.3.2. that the topic time of the main clause is either simultaneous with, follows or overlaps with that of the if-clause.

(59a) if I won the lottery, I would be rich
TT after TU TT after TU

(59b) *if I won the lottery, I would have been rich
TT after TU TT bef/incl TU

(59c) If I had won the lottery, I would be rich
TT bef/incl TU TT incl TU

(59d) If I had won the lottery, I would have been rich
TT bef/incl TU TT bef/incl TU

In (59b) we see that a 2-state if-clause cannot be combined with a main clause containing past forms. After all, we do not know if the lottery will be won or not, so a main clause marked for counterfactuality is ruled out. An example like (59c) on the other hand, is unproblematic. The assertion in the if-clause is cancelled (I have not won/did not win the lottery and as a result, I am not rich). 59c and 59d are very similar. The only difference is that the topic time of the main clause in (d) can either completely precede TU or include TU, while in (c), it has to include TU. Past forms may be used in non-past time frames to signal counterfactuality but not the other way around; non-past hypothetical forms cannot be used to describe an alternative past.

In the examples below a 2-state if-clause is followed by a 2-state main clause. In (60b) we encounter the same problem we saw in (59b). The hypothetical if-clause cannot be followed by a main clause containing verb forms which mark the assertion as cancelled. A combination like 60c is rare. It could mean something like:

*if I had ever won the lottery, up till now, I would buy that house somewhere in the future.

(60a) if I won the lottery, I would buy that house
TT after TU TT after TU

(60b) *if I won the lottery, I would have bought that house
TT after TU TT bef/incl TU

(60c) If I had won the lottery, I would buy that house
TT bef/incl TU TT after TU

(60d) If I had won the lottery, I would have bought that house
TT bef/incl TU TT bef/incl TU

Both clauses in (61) contain a 1-state content, <I be ill> and <I be here> respectively. TT includes or precedes TU.

(61a) If I was ill, I wouldn’t be here
TT incl TU TT incl TU
The *if* clauses in c and d can be derived from: *I have been ill, I was ill* and even *I am ill*. The use of past hypothetical forms to signal counterfactuality in non-past time frames is particularly common in Dutch (see section 1.4., 5.6., 6.2.).

(62a) If I was ill, I would go to the doctor  
TT incl TU   TT after TU  
(62b) If I was ill, I would have gone to the doctor  
TT incl TU   TT bef/incl TU  
(62c) If I had been ill, I would go to the doctor  
TT bef/incl TU   TT after TU  
(62d) If I had been ill, I would have gone to the doctor  
TT bef/incl TU   TT bef/incl TU

In (62) the main clause contains a 2-state proposition <I go to the doctor>. The *if*-clause in (62a) can be, and usually is, interpreted as a counterfactual (*I am not ill and I will not go to the doctor*). It is also possible, however, to use this type of conditional to reason about a possible future (1-state) situation: *If I am ever ill, I will go to the doctor*. This interpretation is cancelled as soon as past hypothetical forms are used in one or both clauses.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter proposes a new approach to the semantics of hypothetical conditional sentences. In the literature there is lack of clarity with respect to the interpretation of hypothetical conditionals. First of all, it is generally assumed that speakers consider whatever is mentioned in a hypothetical *if*-clause highly unlikely. In addition, mention is often made of counterfactual conditionals, i.e. conditionals which are not just highly unlikely but impossible. This counterfactual interpretation is most often associated with hypothetical referring to past time frames, as speakers generally know what did or did not happen in the past and reasoning about alternative pasts tends to result in a counterfactual interpretation. Counterfactuality is not so strongly associated with non-past hypotheticals. It is sometimes claimed they are (highly) improbable, but on the basis of examples like *If I were in your shoes*, it is suggested they can be contrary to fact (But I’m not in your shoes). In addition, it is acknowledged that, as the future is by definition uncertain, speakers merely believe that the condition will not be fulfilled and the *if*-clauses are ‘counter to
expectation’ (Fillmore 1992). According to Comrie conditionals with present time reference ‘occupy an intermediate position’ (Comrie 1986: 90) although it is not clear what this intermediate position entails.

It has been suggested that this indistinctness is not an issue in Dutch because there, speakers are supposed to be able to signal counterfactuality by using the preterite, whereas use of the would equivalent zouden is thought to merely signal hypotheticaity. Examples from actual language use, however, showed that the preterite can also be used in if-clauses with (explicit) future time reference. Conversely, zouden is sometimes used in cases where it is clear that the speaker is convinced that the if-clause is contrary to fact. The answer to the question when exactly an if-clause can be labelled a counterfactual is also far from clear in Dutch.

The main goal of this chapter was to offer a new semantic description of hypothetical conditionals which puts an end to the indistinctness with respect to their interpretation. This revised approach enables us to determine when exactly an if-clause has past, present or future time reference and, as a result, whether it does or does not get a counterfactual interpretation. Klein’s theoretical framework (Klein 1994) was eminently suitable for this goal as it provides a way to establish the interplay between the moment of speaking, the time frame under consideration and the lexical semantics of the propositional content of a conditional clause. Its starting point is that tense does not indicate whether situations precede, coincide with or follow the time of utterance but instead serves to establish the relation between the time of utterance and the time for which a certain claim is made, the topic time (TT). After all, a claim like At 2 o’clock John was having lunch does not exclude the possibility that he is still eating at the time of utterance. A past tense is used simply because a claim is made about some time span which precedes the moment of speaking. Furthermore, Klein distinguishes three types of situation descriptions, which each have a different interplay with the topic time and the time of utterance. The difference between these three types turned out to play an important role in the interpretation of (hypothetical) conditional sentences. First it was shown that so-called 2-state lexical content involves a change of states, e.g. <the bomb explode>, whereby the lexical content contains a transition from not exploded to exploded. With 1-state lexical content like <I have ten thousand dollars> this is not the case. It is possible, however, to make a claim about a time frame preceding, overlapping with or following this situation, which is not the case with the last category, namely 0-state content, like <the Nile be in Africa>. All possible time spans that a speaker can refer to fall within the time of this situation.

This has the following consequences for the analysis of hypothetical conditionals. For an if-clause containing 2-state content, the time span under consideration (TT) has to either precede the time of utterance (If the bomb had exploded, but it didn’t) or follow it (If the bomb exploded and it might); there is nothing in between. This means that non-past hypotheticals with 2-state content in the if-clause have future time reference, are not counterfactual and may even be replaced by an open conditional (If the bomb explodes, and it might) without a dramatic change in meaning. The assertion made for this future topic time is
suspended, but not cancelled. Hypothetical if-clauses with 1 (or 0-) state content behave rather differently. An if-clause like If I were rich generally does get a counterfactual interpretation and it can even be combined with a main clause containing past hypothetical forms (..I would have bought a Mercedes by now); which shows that the assertion is cancelled. The reason that this kind of hypothetical tends to be interpreted as a counterfactual is that people not only know what did or did not happen in the past, but usually also have a clear idea of what is or is not the case now. The generally accepted dichotomy between past and non-past hypotheticals, based solely on the tense forms that can occur in a hypothetical conditional is clearly not sufficient when it comes to making an adequate semantic description of conditional sentences. This new approach to the analysis of hypothetical conditionals proposed in this chapter at least partly solves the problem of the indistinctness with respect to the interpretation of non-past hypotheticals particularly. It has become clear that the lexical semantics of the propositions involved plays a much bigger role than has previously been assumed. However, it should be noted that while this approach does provide an important aid, in practice the context as well as the use of modals and/or temporal adverbials can result in ambiguity or exceptions to the guidelines above.
5. Dutch hypothetical conditionals

5.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to throw some light on various factors which influence the distribution of backshifted tense forms used in Dutch hypotheticals. To this end, a corpus of over a thousand hypothetical conditionals embedded in their context was coded and investigated.

In section 5.1 we survey what the literature has to say about the four possible structures. Section 5.2 summarises the way a Dutch corpus was compiled, coded and analysed. In section 5.3 the results of the investigation of the non-past structures found in the corpus are presented (5.3.1. and 5.3.2.) and discussed (5.3.3.). Section 5.4 deals with Dutch conditionals with past hypothetical forms. Section 5.5 deals with nominal conditionals. The combinations between open and hypothetical verb forms, as well as hybrid patterns containing both past and non-past forms described in Chapter 4 were also found in the corpus and are described in section 5.6. Some possible reasons for the low frequency of conditional structures with a hypothetical preterite in the main clause are given in section 5.7.1., followed by a report on a paired comparison judgement test of the acceptability of such structures in section 5.7.2. Finally, the main findings are summarized in section 5.8.

5.1. Four possible structures

In the previous chapters, we have seen that all four possible combinations of the would-equivalent, zouden + inf., and a preterite can occur in Dutch non-past hypothetical conditionals (1a-d).

(1a)  +/+ Als ik de lotto zou winnen, zou ik een auto kopen
       If I would win the lottery, I would buy a car
(1b)  -/+ Als ik de lotto won, zou ik een auto kopen
       If I won the lottery, I would buy a car
(1c)  -/- Als ik de lotto won, kocht ik een auto
       If I won the lottery, I bought a car
(1d)  +/- Als ik de lotto zou winnen, kocht ik een auto
       If I would win the lottery, I bought a car

Following Wekker, Kellerman and Hermans (1982), the structures of the clauses are coded as follows: a + indicates the use of zouden (‘would’) followed by an infinitive and a - signifies that a clause is marked for hypotheticality by means of the preterite.

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1 For the sake of clarity, the English glosses in this chapter will reflect the verb forms used in Dutch, even where this results in an ungrammatical translation.
With these four alternatives available, the question arises whether and to what extent they differ with respect to their distribution and meaning. It has been suggested (e.g. Kellerman 1989; Nieuwint 1992) that in non-past hypotheticals, counterfactuality can be marked grammatically by using the preterite. Although it has been shown in Chapter 4 that this idea is no longer tenable on the basis of the re-analysis of a number of examples in a new theoretical framework (sections 4.1.2. and 4.3.2.), it is still unclear to what extent the structures are in free variation.

According to Geerts et al. (1984: 428), the choice between zouden and the preterite is essentially stylistic and "regels zijn niet te geven" ('rules cannot be given'). Nieuwint (1992), however, gives a number "odd or unacceptable" examples, most of which have a preterite in the main clause. Although judgements about -/- and +/- structures like (1c) and (1d) above may vary (see section 5.7.2.), it seems to be the use of the preterite in main clauses which can result in unacceptability for many speakers, while the use of zouden + inf. does not seem to be restricted in any way. Kellerman (1989) also notes that structures like (1c) and (1d) above occur even less frequently and are often less acceptable when the main clause is preposed.

However, it seems that the problems with the hypothetical use of the preterite are not limited to main clauses only. More particularly, in hypotheticals with "explicit future time reference (if it rained tomorrow, the match would be cancelled), the preterite in either clause is usually considered unacceptable" (Kellerman 1989: 92).

(2)  
-/+  *Als het morgen regende, zou de wedstrijd afgelast worden  
 'If it rained tomorrow, the match would be cancelled'

Interestingly, on the basis of (2) above, it was predicted that in non-past time frames, the preterite should be more common in if-clauses referring to what he rather vaguely calls "present or indefinite time" (Kellerman 1989: 96) than in those with explicit future reference. This prediction was never tested, however.

In addition, Kellerman (1989) notes that in Dutch 't[her]e may be some purely morphological factors affecting distribution which we have yet to investigate. In non-past time frames, the majority of verbs in -/ protases are highly frequent strong verbs with monosyllabic stems' (Kellerman 1989: 112).

In past hypotheticals, any combination of a pluperfect and a perfect conditional may be used and no mention is made in the literature of any unacceptable or ungrammatical structures. However, with the aid of a corpus of 641 Dutch hypothetical conditionals, Kellerman (1989) found that in past time if-clauses, the pluperfect was used more often than the perfect conditional.

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2 With past hypothetical forms, - indicates the presence of a pluperfect while a + signifies that a perfect conditional is used.

3 Many hypothetical conditionals were added to this (Nijmegen) corpus to form the corpus used in the present study.
DUTCH HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONALS

(3a)  +/+  Als hij dat zou hebben gedaan, zou ik hem hebben weggestuurd
       ‘If he would have done that, I would have sent him away’

(3b)  -/+  Als hij dat had gedaan, zou ik hem hebben weggestuurd
       ‘If he had done that, I would have sent him away’

(3c)  -/-  Als hij had dat gedaan, had ik hem weggestuurd
       ‘If he had done that, I had sent him away’

(3d)  +/-  Als hij dat zou hebben gedaan, had ik hem weggestuurd
       ‘If he would have done that, I had sent him away’

5.2. The corpus study

A corpus of 1162 Dutch hypothetical conditionals embedded in their context was
investigated to gain more insight into the distribution of the various alternatives in
actual language use. The conditionals were drawn from newspapers, magazines,
radio, TV, books and everyday conversation, so that the corpus not only included
spoken and written language, but also spoken language written down and written
language intended to be spoken.4

Not all 1162 conditionals were included in the analysis. 82 conditionals were
excluded because they appeared in indirect speech or were embedded in a past time
context (e.g. 4 below). 20 conditionals turned out to be non-predictive (e.g. 5
below), and there were 15 cases were an if-clause was used without a main clause or
vice versa (e.g. 6 below).

(4)  Ik had geen dak boven mijn hoofd en als ik nu niet gauw naar London
terugging, zou ik ook geen meubelen meer hebben5
       ‘I did not have a roof over my head and if I did not return to London soon,
       I would not have any furniture left either’

(5)  Als we ooit een kans hadden een eredivisionist te verslaan, dan was het wel
tegen Volendam6
       ‘If we ever had a chance to beat a premier league team, it was against
       Volendam’

(6)  Zo niet, dan zou hij verdere verspreiding van zijn vertalingen desnoods
met hulp van de rechter verhinderen7
       ‘If not, then he would prevent further circulation of his translations, if
       necessary with the aid of the judge’

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4 The criterion for selection was that at least one of the clauses should contain a hypothetical
preterite, zouden + inf., mocht ‘should’, a pluperfect or a perfect conditional.
5 Libelle March 24, 1984
6 De Telegraaf October 10, 1984
7 De Volkskrant November 9, 1985
22 past habitual conditionals turned out to have been erroneously included in the corpus (see note 29). The remaining 1023 conditionals were coded for structure (+/+ , -/+ , -/- or +/-) and time frame.

The analysis of time frame is based on the theoretical account outlined in Chapter 4. There it was shown that conditionals with non-past hypothetical forms can be subdivided into those with future time reference (TT after TU) and those with present time reference (TT includes TU). However, in 45 cases it was insufficiently clear whether the topic time included or followed the time of utterance as in (7) below:

(7) Als die twintig miljoen uitsluitend besteed zou worden aan opdrachten voor de ruim 3000 kunstenaars, zouden ze allemaal aan 6000 gulden eigen inkomsten kunnen komen8

‘If those twenty million would be spent exclusively on commissions for the approximately 3000 artists, they would all be able to earn 6000 guilders of their own’

As (7) was (erroneously) not preceded by any context, it is not clear whether the speaker wants to imply that the money is not being spent on commissions for the artists or whether he leaves open the possibility that it may be spent on them in the future. For a theoretical account of this kind of ambiguity, the reader is referred to sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.

Out of the remaining 978 hypothetical conditionals, 476 contained non-past forms (section 5.3.) and 275 past forms (section 5.4.). Finally, there were 227 cases where the speaker (writer) switched between either non-past and past verb forms or non-hypothetical and hypothetical verb forms. These hybrid structures will be dealt with in section 5.6.

The analysis of conditionals with past hypothetical forms was complicated by the fact that even though conditionals with past hypothetical forms usually have past time reference (TT before TU), they may also have present time reference (TT includes TU) when a present perfect is backshifted (e.g. I have never been to London -> if I had ever been to London). In Dutch, however, a present perfect (and a backshifted present perfect) is also widely used when the topic time precedes the time of utterance as in ik ben gisteren naar London gegaan lit: I am yesterday to London gone (‘I went to London yesterday’) -> als ik gisteren naar London was gegaan lit: if I yesterday to London was gone (‘if I had gone to London yesterday’).

In addition to time frame, it was determined for every conditional whether the finite verb in the if-clause was strong or weak to find out if there is indeed a relation between the use of the preterite and verb morphology as was suggested by Kellerman (1989).

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8 De Volkskrant October 26, 1984
DUTCH HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONALS

There is one other factor briefly dealt with in section 1.5, which has hitherto remained underexposed in studies involving Dutch conditionals, namely clause order. Consider the following two versions of example (1)

(8a) Als ik de lotto zou winnen/won, zou ik een auto kopen/kocht ik een auto
    'If I would win/won the lottery, I would buy/bought a car
(8b) Ik zou een auto kopen/kocht een auto, als ik de lotto zou winnen/won
    'I would buy/bought a car, if I would win/won the lottery

It was felt that the difference between conditionals like (8a) and (8b) was worth investigating to see how and to what extent the position of the if-clause affects the choice between zouden ‘would’ + inf. and/or the preterite.

In the analysis to be reported here, conditionals containing past hypothetical forms will be dealt with separately. The choice between zouden and the preterite cannot be directly compared to that between the pluperfect and perfect conditional for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been shown in the literature that in Dutch the use of the preterite is not always acceptable to all speakers, while there is no mention of any restrictions or problematic cases involving a pluperfect (or indeed a perfect conditional). Secondly, one important objective of the corpus study is to find out more about the two types of non-past hypotheticals that can be distinguished (future hypotheticals and present counterfactuels), which means that past hypotheticals cannot be included in the same quantitative analysis. Finally, past hypothetical forms only involve a choice between had + past participle or zou hebben/zijn ‘would have’ + past participle and the nature of the main verb (strong or weak) is not likely to be relevant.

5.3. Analysis: non-past

The corpus contained 476 non-past conditionals that were included in the analysis. Table 5.1 below shows the frequencies of the four Dutch structures classified according to time frame, clause order and verb morphology.

Before we turn to the distribution of the various alternatives, some remarks about the frequencies in the margins of the table are in order. In the right-most column, we can see that overall +/- is used most often, followed by -/+ , and also that -/- and +/- are indeed rare in non-past time frames.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the most common clause order in conditional sentences is if-clause followed by main clause. Ford and Thompson (1986) found that in their corpus of English open and hypothetical conditionals, 23% of the written if-clauses occurred finally. For spoken language, the percentage of final if-clauses was even lower (18%). In Nieuwint’s Eindhoven corpus of 94 Dutch hypothetical conditionals about one third of the if-clauses occurred in final position
In Kellerman's Nijmegen corpus this figure was about 30\% (Kellerman 1989: 105).

Adding up the total numbers of initial and final if-clauses, we find that 199 (42\%) of the if-clauses in the present corpus occur finally. It is interesting to note that the percentage of final if-clauses is not constant across the two time frames.\(^9\) The number of final if-clauses with future time reference is noticeably higher than that with present time reference. In fact there are slightly more final if-clauses (126 or 52\%) than initial ones (117 or 48\%). With present time reference, the number of final if-clauses is lower, namely 73 (31\%) with 160 (69\%) initial. This difference will be dealt with in section 5.5.

Table 5.1
The frequencies of the non-past Dutch structures found in the corpus, classified according to TIME, ORDER and VERB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TT after TU</th>
<th>TT includes TU</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>str</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tot</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bottom row of Table 5.1 also shows that as many as 401 (84\%) of the if-clauses have a strong verb, against only 75 (16\%) with a weak verb. This is simply the result of the fact that the most frequent verbs in Dutch (as well as in other languages) are strong. With the aid of the CELEX database (CEnter for LEXical information), it was found that the 10 most frequent verbs in Dutch are zijn 'be', hebben 'have', worden 'become', zullen 'will', kunnen 'can', gaan 'go', komen 'come', zeggen 'say', moeten 'have to' and zien 'see' and they are all strong. In fact maken 'make' is the only weak verb in the top 30.

By far the most frequent verb in the corpus is zijn 'be', followed by hebben 'have', both of which generally occur in present counterfactuals. Kunnen 'can' and

\(^9\) In some conditionals found in the corpus, the if-clause is embedded in the main clause, e.g. Misschien zou ik, als ik toen geleefd had, hun mening wel gedeeld hebben (literally: 'Maybe would I, if I then lived had, their opinion indeed shared have'). Here the choice between zou and had in the main clause occurs before that of the embedded if-clause: Misschien zou ik ...
(lit. 'Maybe would I...') versus Misschien had ik ... (lit. 'Maybe had I...'). For this reason they are classed with conditionals with reversed order.
weten 'know' also appear frequently in this type of conditional. In future hypotheticals, worden 'become', gaan 'go', komen 'come' and krijgen 'get' were most frequent, although none of them were as frequent as 'be' or 'have'. The weak verbs showed even more variation. In fact, with the exception of gebeuren 'happen'(4) and horen 'hear'(2), the weak verbs were each used only once.

In order to analyse this multi-dimensional frequency Table, 4 logit analyses were carried out. Each structure was taken in turn as the dependent variable FO RM (i.e. +/+ , -/+ , -/- and +/-) and the effects of the independent variables TIME (future versus present), ORDER (initial versus final) and VERB (strong versus weak) and their interactions were tested. For each FORM, the logit procedure analyses the number of occurrences (e.g. +/+) as opposed to the number of non-occurrences (i.e. -/+ , -/-, +/-).

**Table 5.2**
Logit analyses: The parameters and z-values for each of the four Dutch structures: +/+, -/+ , -/- and +/- . * indicates significance of the z-value at the 5% level and ** indicates significance at the 1% level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+/+ z-values</th>
<th>-/+ z-values</th>
<th>-/- z-values</th>
<th>+/- z-values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>3.79**</td>
<td>-2.94**</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>2.42*</td>
<td>-3.46**</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>-3.26**</td>
<td>2.30**</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>2.59**</td>
<td>-2.27**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by VERB</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.62</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER by VERB</td>
<td>-2.12*</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER by VERB</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structures with a preterite in the main clause are rare in non-past time frames and the frequencies found in the corpus were too low for any significant effects to be found. Instead speakers generally mark the main clause by means of a periphrastic conditional (zouden + inf.) As a result of this, the other two structures (+/+ and -/+ ) are to all intents and purposes each other's counterparts: in most cases a decrease in the number of +/+ structures implies an increase in the number of -/+ structures and vice versa.

All three main effects are significant for the two structures. More +/+ is used with future (163 out of 243, or 67%) than with present time reference (78 out of 233, or 33%) while the reverse applies to -/+ : 28% future (68 out of 243) and 51% present (118 out of 233). As we can see in Table 5.3. below, final if-clauses trigger
+/- more often (51%) than initial ones (50%). The ORDER effect for +/- is stronger: 46% final and 34% initial. In Table 1, we can see that, although the number of if-clauses with a weak verb is small, more +/- is used with weak (72%, 54 out of 75) than with strong verbs (47%, 187 out of 401). Once more the opposite applies to -/+ (strong 42% (176 out of 401) and weak 25% (19 out of 75)). However, the factors TIME and ORDER interacted in both cases and for the +/- structures, ORDER interacts with VERB. No three-way interactions were found at all.

5.3.1. Time and order
Table 5.3 below gives the frequencies and column percentages found for initial and final if-clauses in the two time frames.

Table 5.3
The non-past structures found in the Dutch corpus, broken down by TIME and ORDER (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TT after TU</th>
<th>TT includes TU</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>91 (78%)</td>
<td>72 (57%)</td>
<td>48 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>52 (41%)</td>
<td>78 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>21 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>13 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>117 (100)</td>
<td>126 (100)</td>
<td>160 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1a
TIME by ORDER: the Dutch corpus (+/+)
For the +/+ structures, the TIME effect is significant in initial if-clauses only (z = 7.44). As we can see in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.1a, there is a strong preference for +/+ (78%) with future time reference in initial if-clauses, while with present time reference only 30% +/+ is used initially. In final if-clauses the TIME effect (57% +/+ future and 41% +/+ present) is smaller and not significant (z = 2.16).

For -/+ structures too, the TIME effect is significant in initial if-clauses only (z = -5.72); more -/+ is used in present initial (49%) than in future initial if-clauses (14%). In final if-clauses the difference between future (41% -/+ ) and present (55% -/+ ) is not significant (z = -1.83).

The ORDER effect is stronger for future than for present conditionals. The line for future time reference in Figure 5.1a drops from 78% +/+ in initial if-clauses to only 57% +/+ in final ones (z = 3.36). Figure 5.1b shows the opposite pattern for -/+ sentences: an increase of future -/+ structures from 14% initially to 41% finally (z = -4.57). There are no significant differences between initial and final if-clauses in conditionals with present time reference, with z-scores of -1.67 and -.085 for +/+ and -/+ respectively.

The ORDER effect for -/+ is not the exact opposite of that observed for +/+. In order to explain this, we have to take into account the fact that even though the number of -/- and +/- structures is small, those that do occur have present time reference and occur almost exclusively in initial if-clauses. In other words, the preterite tends not to be used in preposed main clauses and -/+ is used instead. It is for this reason that the lines for present time reference rise slightly in both figures.
5.3.2. Order and verb
Table 5.4 below gives the frequencies found in the corpus broken down by ORDER and VERB.

Table 5.4
The non-past structures found in the Dutch corpus, broken down by ORDER and VERB (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strong</th>
<th></th>
<th>weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/+</td>
<td>106 (44%)</td>
<td>81 (50%)</td>
<td>33 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>90 (38%)</td>
<td>77 (47%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>26 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>17 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>239 (100)</td>
<td>162 (100)</td>
<td>38 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The logit analysis reported a significant interaction effect for +/+ structures only. As we can see in Figure 5.2, the VERB effect for +/+ is limited to initial if-clauses (z = -4.25) such that more +/+ is used with weak than with strong verbs (86.9% and 44.4% respectively). In final if-clauses there is only a small difference, namely 56.8% weak and 50% strong (z = 0.73).

The difference between initial and final if-clauses is significant only with weak verbs (z = 2.73), where there is a strong tendency to use +/+ in initial if-clauses (86.9%) and the line goes down to 56.8% for final if-clauses. When a strong verb occurs in the if-clause, there is no ORDER effect (z = -1.11).
5.3.3. Discussion
With the aid of this corpus analysis, we can now say that Kellerman’s prediction that the preterite is used more often in present than in future if-clauses is confirmed but the claim that the preterite signals counterfactuality cannot be supported, given the 28% -/+ used to describe future hypothetical situations.

The examples below are taken from the corpus and are prototypical examples of the most common structures with future (9) and present time reference (10).

(9)  
+/- Als Zuid-Afrika zijn chroomexport zou stopzetten, zouden één miljoen Amerikanen hun baan verliezen

‘If South Africa would stop chromium exports, one million Americans would lose their job’

(10)  
-/+ Als ik een Ford Fiësta van 1981 had, zou ik er ook over denken hem in te ruilen

‘If I had a 1981 Ford Fiësta, I would consider trading it in too’

However, in order to account for this tendency, we need to look at the interaction between time frame and clause order. Apparently, initial if-clauses which refer to the future and contain a preterite are indeed rare e.g. (11a), as was suggested by Kellerman (1989). In final if-clauses, this preference for +/- largely disappears (57% +/- against 41% -/+); examples like (7b) are not hard to find. Note that both (11a) and (11b) would be coded as -/+ irrespective of the order of the clauses.

---

10 TV interview October 22, 1985
11 *De Volkskrant* February 2, 1986
(11a) -/+ Als hij (morgen) op mijn feestje kwam, zou ik hem eruit gooien
   'If he came to my party tomorrow, I would throw him out'
(11b) -/+ Ik zou hem eruit gooien, als hij (morgen) op mijn feestje kwam
   'I would throw him out, if he came to my party tomorrow'

Apparently, the need to mark an if-clause with future time reference unambiguously as hypothetical by means of *zouden* is felt less strongly when it is preceded by a main clause already marked by *zouden*. Moreover, in future initial if-clauses containing a preterite, phrases like *nou eens* or *een keer*, (lit. now once, a time 'what if?') can often be found, making them suggestions or wishes, so that they cannot be mistaken for open conditionals in the past (see section 5.5.1.).

(12) -/+ Als ze nou eens gingen bewegen, dan zou het nog mooier zijn
   'If they were to start to move, then it would be even better'

In view of the fact that the hypothetical preterite with future time reference is rare in initial if-clauses, it is not surprising that this preterite is associated with counterfactuality in Nieuwint’s (1992) and Kellerman’s (1989) work, while *zouden* + inf. is thought to (merely) signal hypotheticality. After all, the preterite is much more widespread in initial hypothetical if-clauses with present time reference. Both *zouden* and the preterite can freely be used in if-clauses with present time reference, although both structures occur more frequently in final if-clauses. This is caused by the fact that those few -/- and +/- structures that do occur, tend to be used when the if-clause occurs initially, as was also noted by Kellerman (1989: 105). A preterite is hardly ever used, or is even unacceptable, if the main clause is preposed. Example (13) below is one of the few examples found in the present corpus.

(13) -/- Weet je wat ik deed als ik binnenlandse zaken beheerde?
   'Do you know what I did (i.e. 'would do') if I was in charge of the Home Office?'

The fact that structures like (13) above are very rare also influenced the interaction of ORDER and VERB. The VERB effect is significant overall: strong verbs trigger the preterite more often (e.g. *Als ik geld had* 'If I had money'), while with weak verbs there is a shift to *zouden* + inf. (e.g. *Als ik in Amsterdam zou wonen* 'If I would live in Amsterdam'). However, as we have seen in Figure 5.2, the VERB effect is limited to those if-clauses that occur initially.

On the basis of the main effects only, we would expect two parallel lines, where the line for weak verbs would lie above that for strong verbs (more +/- weak than strong) and both lines would go down (more +/+ initially than finally). This first prediction is indeed confirmed. In Figure 5.2, the line for strong verbs, however, does not go down as there is no ORDER effect. This can be accounted for if we look

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12 *Playboy Magazine* September 1995
13 TV interview, date unknown
at the -/- and +/- structures in Table 5.4. They occur almost exclusively with initial if-clauses containing strong verbs. As a result, it is in that condition only that -/- and +/- are used at the expense of the other structures, and the proportion of +/- is lower than would be expected on the basis of +/- and -/+ only.

5.4. Past hypothetical forms

When past hypothetical forms are used in both clauses, the most frequent structure in our corpus is -/-.

(14) -/-  Als ik het had geweten, had ik hem mee naar huis genomen. 'If I had known, I had taken him home'

However, in Table 5.5 below, we can see that this preference for -/- is much stronger when the if-clause occurs initially.

Table 5.5
The past hypothetical structures found in the Dutch corpus, broken down by ORDER\(^\text{15}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>initial</th>
<th>final</th>
<th>tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>19 (9%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>25 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>46 (23%)</td>
<td>39 (53%)</td>
<td>85 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>131 (65%)</td>
<td>27 (37%)</td>
<td>158 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tot</td>
<td>202 (100%)</td>
<td>73 (100%)</td>
<td>275 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the if-clause occurs finally, -/+ is preferred, as in (15) below.

(15) -/+ Maar die handtekeningen zouden nooit gezet zijn, als de ware cijfers bekend waren geweest. 'But those signatures would never have been placed, if the true figures had been known'

\(^{14}\) Garcia Marquez, G. (1981). Kroniek van een aangekondigde dood. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, p.21
\(^{15}\) Pearson chi square 24.169, df 3, p = .000
\(^{16}\) TV interview October 26, 1984
This suggests that the tendency to mark a preposed main clause by means of zouden ‘would’ can also be found in past counterfactuals despite the fact that, overall, the ambiguity of the pluperfect seems to be less problematic than that of the preterite in Dutch.

5.5. Nominal conditionals

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Nieuwint (1992) observed that there is one type of conditional which often has the if-clause in final position. In these so-called nominal conditionals, the if-clause is a nominal clause that functions as the subject or object of a main clause, usually of the type it would be nice if..., it would be awful if... etc. Most nominal conditionals in the corpus have future time reference (16) but present (17) and past (18) nominals are also found.

(16)  -/+ Het zou me niet verbazen, als ik katholiek werd\footnote{Höweler, M. (1983). Van geluk gesproken. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, p.24.} ‘I would not be surprised, if I became a catholic’

(17)  +/+ Ik zou het helemaal niet leuk vinden, als ze nu al 15 zou zijn\footnote{De Telegraaf October 15, 1986} ‘I would not like it at all, if she would already be 15’

(18)  -/+ Het zou mooi zijn geweest als de zes Antillen tezamen bereid en in staat waren geweest tot een soort van nationale eenheid\footnote{De Tijd September 21, 1984} ‘It would have been nice if the six Antilles together had been prepared to and capable of forming some kind of national unity’

In order to examine the distribution of the four structures in this special type of conditionals, all nominals were removed from Table 5.1 and listed in Table 5.6.

The bottom row of this table shows that the if-clause occurs finally in no fewer than 116 out of 135 cases (86%). This tendency can be observed across all time frames. As far as the distribution of the four structures is concerned, the pattern is very similar to that in Table 5.3, described in 5.3.1. above, that is, a strong preference for +/+ in future initial if-clauses, and a shift to -/+ with final if-clauses. The frequencies for present and past are rather low but the nominals that do occur seem to follow the patterns observed in Tables 5.3 and 5.5: +/- or -/+ with present time reference and a preference for +/- in past counterfactuals with final if-clauses.
Table 5.6
Nominal conditionals found in the Dutch corpus, broken down by TIME and ORDER (for the total, column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TT after TU</th>
<th>TT includes TU</th>
<th>TT bef/incl TU</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53 (46%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>116 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that nominal conditionals usually have a final if-clause has caused the overall percentage of such clauses (36%) to be relatively high compared to other figures reported in the literature. If we leave out the nominals, the total number of final if-clauses in the corpus drops to 156, or 25%. Apart from the syntactic differences (and resulting differences in preferred order) between the two types, however, the distributional pattern of the four alternatives does not seem to differ from that among adverbial conditionals.

5.6. Hybrid structures

In section 4.3.2, it was claimed that open future predictives and hypothetical future predictives are closely related. It is therefore not surprising that Nieuwint noted that "it is quite usual for people to make halfway switches from one type of conditional to another, the most common switch probably being that from a protasis with the simple present tense to an apodosis with "would" + infinitive" (Nieuwint 1992: 90). This is supported by the Dutch corpus, where 133 of these switches between backshifted and non-backshifted forms were found. Contrary to what was predicted by Nieuwint, however, 94 (71%) of these are switches from a hypothetical if-clause to a non-hypothetical main clause as in (19) below. Only 39 (29%) have a simple present tense in de if-clause and a periphrastic conditional in the main clause as in (20).
(19) +/- Als ik zou merken dat dat gebeurt, stop ik onmiddellijk\(^{20,21}\)
If I would find out that that happens, I quit immediately

(20) +/- Als morgen de Chinezen binnenvallen (..) zou het kabinet van Agt na afloop van de bezetting nog ontzet tend op zijn donder krijgen\(^{22}\)
‘If the Chinese invade tomorrow, the van Agt government would get hell’

No hypothetical preterites were found in these hybrid conditionals at all. Apparently, when a speaker marks only one of the two clauses for hypotheticality, this tends to be done by means of the periphrastic conditional zouden + inf.\(^{23}\)

In addition to switches from non-hypothetical to hypothetical forms, the corpus contains many structures with non-past hypothetical forms in one clause and past hypothetical forms in the other. All eight possible combinations of past and non-past forms occur.

**Table 5.7**
The frequencies for the structures involving a combination of past and non-past forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>if-clause</th>
<th>main clause</th>
<th>if-clause</th>
<th>main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zouden + inf.</td>
<td>perfect cond</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>perfect cond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preterite</td>
<td>perfect cond</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preterite</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zouden + inf.</td>
<td>pluperfect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>perfect cond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(21) below is an example of non-past forms in the if-clause and past forms in the main clause. The topic time in the if-clause includes the time of utterance and is counterfactual. The main clause means something like: ‘we would have taken action in the past (by now)’. In (22) it is the other way around. The topic time of the if-clause precedes the time of utterance (‘last night’) while in the main clause the speaker is talking about the moment of speaking (‘now’).

(21) +/- Als we concrete aanwijzingen hadden, waren we wel opgetreden\(^{24}\).
‘If we had concrete indications, we had taken action’

\(^{20}\) This example has a present tense in the main clause, which is usually the case in Dutch open future predicatives. The auxiliary zullen ‘will’ + infinitive can also be used although it was found in only 16% of the non-backshifted main clauses in the corpus. Zullen is even more rare in if-clauses with only one example found in the corpus.

\(^{21}\) *De Nieuwe Krant* November 10, 1984

\(^{22}\) Blokker, J. (1982). *Is mijn haar al weer kort genoeg*. Amsterdam: De Harmonie

\(^{23}\) In addition there were 20 future conditionals like the one in (13) where the if-clause contained mocht ‘should’ instead of zouden + inf.

\(^{24}\) *De Volkskrant* December 4, 1984
DUTCH HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONALS

(22)  -/+  Als ik vannacht nog getwijfeld had, zou ik hier nu niet kunnen staan'\(^5\) "If I had been in doubt last night, I would not be standing here now"

Apart from cases like (21) and (22) above, where it is clear that the pluperfect is used when the topic time precedes the time of utterance, there are many cases where a pluperfect (or perfect conditional) is used in clauses with present time reference (see section 1.4).\(^6\) Both clauses in the example from the corpus below clearly have present time reference although the main clause contains a perfect conditional.

(23)  +/+  Jan van Eijk deed ook van alles. Als hij nu zou leven, zou hij reclames hebben gemaakt\(^7\)  
Jan van Eijk also did all kinds of things. If he would be alive now, he would have made commercials

In the main clause zou maken 'would make' could also be used.

One reason for this use of the pluperfect (and perfect conditional) in non-past time frames may be the indistinctness of the time frame under consideration in conditionals with a 1-state proposition in the if-clause (see section 4.3.2.).

(24)  -/+  If he had time, he would go to Mexico

Although in isolation this conditional is likely to get the counterfactual interpretation 'he does not have time and he won't go to Mexico', it can also be used with future time reference 'if he ever has time, he will go'. In sentences like these, the use of the pluperfect or perfect conditional can resolve the ambiguity.

5.7. The hypothetical preterite

5.7.1. Ambiguity
As we have seen in Chapter 2, subjunctive markers have disappeared in both Dutch and English. According to James, this has had the following consequences in English:

As the subjunctive loses its distinctiveness, becoming phonologically identical with the indicative for most verbs, it is no longer sufficient to distinguish clauses which are not intended to match states of affairs from

\(^5\) *Viva* nr. 43, 1984

\(^6\) In addition we saw in section 4.3.2. that a pluperfect (or perfect conditional) is ambiguous between a backshifted preterite and a backshifted present perfect. This means that in some cases it is not clear whether the topic time of a counterfactual clause precedes or includes the time of utterance.

\(^7\) *De Volkskrant* December 20, 1986
those which are so intended provided a particular condition is met. The auxiliary would supplants the past subjunctive in the apodosis of ‘counterfactual’ conditionals because it represents a state of affairs unambiguously as an imagined possibility, just as the past subjunctive does in earlier English when it is distinctive (James 1986: 85).

In neither Dutch nor English can a preterite occur in a hypothetical main clause like the one below, where zouden ‘would’ + inf. is used.28

(25) Hij komt vanavond misschien langs
Dat zou leuk zijn / *dat was leuk
He may be coming over tonight
That would be nice / *that was nice

Although in Dutch, zouden has not (yet) completely replaced the hypothetical preterite in main clauses, the loss of the subjunctive and the resulting ambiguity is likely to play a role in Dutch too. The question remains why the preterite can be (and is) used in some cases, while it would be unacceptable in others.

The answer could be provided by the difference between the following -/- conditionals offered by Nieuwint (1992). Because of their double preterite, they are ambiguous between a hypothetical conditional and a past habitual (open conditional in the past).

(26) -/- Als je wat zei, kreeg je straf
‘If you said something, you were punished’
(27) -/- Als je in de gevangenis zat, bezocht ik je elke dag
‘If you were in prison, I visited you every day’
(28) -/- Als je wat eerlijker uit je ogen keek, geloofde ik je
‘If you looked more honest, I believed you’

Nieuwint uses these examples to show that “some sentences will be unacceptable if given a conditional, but acceptable if given an interpretation that is temporal and conditional at the same time” (Nieuwint 1992: 27). This seems to be the case with the first example, which as Nieuwint notes, can really only mean ‘in those days, you were punished whenever you said something’, while in the second example the hypothetical conditional meaning is the more likely option i.e. ‘If you were in prison, I would visit you every day’ rather than ‘whenever you were in prison, I always visited you every day’. The third example “automatically” receives the interpretation ‘if you looked a bit more honest, I would believe you, but you don’t

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28 The use of the preterite is possible in, for example, wishes (marked by inversion) but also in a sentence like Ik bleef graag nog een weekje langer maar ik moet weer aan het werk Lit: ‘I stayed gladly another week but I must again to work’, which appears in Haeseryn et al. 1997: 1619.
and I don’t believe you. Apparently there is more reason to avoid ambiguity in some cases than in others.

Interestingly, (26) has a 2-state proposition in both clauses <you say something> < you get punished>. This means that in theory, it could be a hypothetical conditional with future time reference; ‘if you said/were to say something, you would be punished’ but in practice it is given the non-hypothetical, past habitual interpretation ‘whenever you said something, you were punished’. It is therefore not surprising that this type of -/- hypothetical is very rare in the corpus. Moreover, as was already mentioned in section 5.2.1., where it does occur, the if-clause tends to be marked by expressions like nou eens, een keer, tenminste or adverbials of future time to indicate that the if-clause is not a past habitual but a future hypothetical.29

(29)    -/-    Als het tenminste maar weer licht werd, dan was er weer hoop30
‘If it just only became light again, then there was hope again

In (27) and (28) both the hypothetical and the non-hypothetical interpretation are again possible but the present counterfactual interpretation is obvious, especially in cases like (28), which has a 1-state proposition in both clauses, and the double preterite is not very likely to give rise to misunderstandings. Nieuwint points out that in conditionals like (28) the what he calls the “not now” interpretation ‘is in the foreground in both clauses” (Nieuwint 1992: 48) and notes that they are often used by speakers to make a point of the fact that the proposition in the if-clause must be false by describing a situation in the main clause which is clearly counterfactual. This kind of reasoning is particularly clear in examples (30) and (31) from the corpus, where the speaker wants to claim that: “I am not a business man” (30) and “I am not a bastard because people do help me” (31).

(30)    -/-    Als ik zakenman was, zat ik nu geld te tellen met een apparaat of zo31
‘If I was a businessman, I was counting money with a machine or something’

(31)    -/-    Als ik zo’n rotvent was, hielpen ze me niet32
‘If I was such a bastard, they did not help me’

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29 Interestingly, when the Dutch corpus was compiled, 22 -/- structures were erroneously added as they turned out to be open conditionals in the past, i.e. conditionals where als ‘if’ can be replaced by ‘whenever’:

Als hij iets ontdekte, werkte hij net zo lang tot hij alle feiten op een rijtje had
‘If he discovered something, he worked until he had all the facts straight’

Als de Spanjaarden het land niet konden kopen, onteigenden ze het
‘If the Spaniards could not buy the land, they annexed it’

30 Dutch novel (1970), title unknown
31  De Volkskrant November 3, 1984
32  Panorama 1971
In addition, it is also the case that many present +/- counterfactuals including (30) and (31) are not ambiguous. *If*-clauses like *Als ik jou/een zakenman/zo'n rotvent was...* ("If I were you/a businessman/such a bastard...") are obviously counterfactual and cannot be interpreted as ‘whenever I was you/a businessman...’ etc.

In the corpus, present counterfactual +/- structures still make up only 10% of the total number of present counterfactuals. This means that even in cases where there is no danger of ambiguity, *zouden* + inf. is preferred to the preterite in main clauses.

This is again confirmed by the small number of +/- strutures that could be found in the corpus. Even though the *if*-clause marked by *zouden* clearly establishes that the conditional is hypothetical, it is hardly ever followed by a main clause containing a preterite. Many of Nieuwint’s problematic or ungrammatical examples are of this type.

(32) +/- *Als je dat kopje zou laten vallen, brak het* (Nieuwint 1992: 34)

‘If you would drop that cup, it broke’

But there does not seem to be anything wrong with these +/- structures found in the corpus.

(33) +/- *Als Sophia Loren in mijn bed zou liggen, ging ik niet op de grond slapen*33

‘If Sophia Loren would be lying in my bed, I didn’t go and sleep on the floor’

(34) +/- *Als ik daar zou staan, pakte ik mijn spullen en vertrok gewoon*34

‘If I would be standing there, I simply grabbed my stuff and left’

On the basis of a few examples presented by Nieuwint (1992), Kellerman (1989) claims that Dutch +/- structures are often used as promises or threats e.g. *Als je dat zou doen, schopte ik je zo de trap af* (‘If you did that, I would kick you down the stairs’). In the Dutch corpus, however, there is not a single +/- structure which fits this description. There are, however, indications that the connection between the two clauses may influence the acceptability of the hypothetical preterite in main clauses. Nieuwint (1992: 14, 34-35) draws attention to the difference between, on the one hand, conditionals where the relation between the clauses is logical, causal and beyond the control of the speaker (e.g. 32) and on the other hand conditionals where the speaker is in control and decides that there is a connection between the propositions involved (33) and (34). Many +/- and -/- sentence found in the corpus are of this latter type and describe what the speaker would do under certain (hypothetical) circumstances.

In addition to conditionals showing this stochastic type of reasoning, the most common type of +/- conditional are again those which have a 1-state proposition in

33 *Dutch Playboy Magazine* September 1995
34 *KUNieuws* October 1994
both clauses and get what could be called the ‘not y, hence not x’ interpretation we have already seen in (30) and (31) above:

(35)  +/-  Als er veel kinderporno filmstudio’s zouden zijn, dan was dat via tipgevers zeker bekend35  
‘If there would be many child pornography filmstudios, this was certainly known through police informers’

(36)  +/-  Als Tsatski (...) echt slim zou zijn, dan liet hij zich niet een heel toneelstuk lang in met zijn domme omgeving36  
‘If Tsatski (...) would really be clever, he didn’t associate with his stupid environment throughout the play’

However, there are still some problematic cases, and, as we shall see in the next section, it is far from clear exactly when the preterite can or cannot be used.

-/- can be and is used much more freely in hypothetical conditionals with past time reference, Apparently, in conditionals with past hypothetical forms, zouden does not need to be used to indicate that the conditional is hypothetical. This is probably due to the fact that the pluperfect is much less likely to give rise to misunderstandings. Theoretically, a pluperfect is also ambiguous but in a very different way from the preterite. An if-clause like If he had done that... usually gets a counterfactual reading: he didn’t do that, although a non-predictive reading (if it is true that he had done that...) is also possible (see section 1.4.).

5.7.2. Acceptability
On the basis of the corpus material described above, the only thing we can say about the hypothetical preterite with any certainty is that it is rare in Dutch hypothetical main clauses. What we cannot say, however, is to what extent -/- and +/- conditionals are or can be unacceptable. In order to find out to what extent native speakers of Dutch agree with respect to the acceptability of hypothetical conditionals with a preterite in the main clause (i.e. -/- and +/-), an acceptability judgement test was designed. Since Nieuwint (1992) is the only work on Dutch conditionals where the acceptability of -/- and +/- sentences is dealt with, this work was taken as our starting point. In fact, an important part of Nieuwint’s theoretical account of Dutch hypotheticals is based on his intuitions about a number of -/- and +/- sentences, which he labels as “unacceptable”, “gives a slightly uncomfortable feeling”, “perfectly all right” or “very odd indeed”.

Sixteen of his variably problematic -/- and +/- examples were selected and each subtype was judged by 20 native speakers of Dutch by means of the method of paired comparisons. (The sentences and the results of the paired comparisons are
given in appendices A and B). This method is particularly suitable when it is possible that subjects are not capable of giving each stimulus a reliable position on a scale running from positive (in this case "acceptable") to negative (in this case "unacceptable"). All 28 possible pairs of test sentences were offered to the subjects and for each pair they had to indicate which of the two they thought was more acceptable. In addition the coefficient of consistence was calculated to see whether individual subjects were capable of ordering the sentences in a consistent way.

Even though the tests contained both conditionals labelled as "unacceptable" and conditionals which were considered to be "perfectly all right" by Nieuwint, there is no single sentence pair on which all subjects agree which conditional "sounds best". With the -/- sentences the highest percentage is 90% (18 subjects preferred one sentence and 2 the other) but there was also a sentence pair where only a small majority of 11 subjects (55%) opted for one conditional while no fewer than 9 preferred the other. In fact, with the +/- sentences there is even less agreement. Percentages around 50% are not uncommon and the percentages ranged from 50% to only 75%. This means that, even when confronted with the overall most and overall least preferred sentence, only 75 per cent preferred the former.

Making statements in relative terms is all that can be done on the bases of these data. Subjects were not asked explicitly whether the sentences judged as most acceptable overall are actually acceptable to them. They may still be thought to be unacceptable, only less so than the others. However, given the fact that, even when making paired comparisons, native speakers disagree all the time about which sentence "sounds better" than the other and that even an example of actual language use is not thought to be more acceptable than contrived and supposedly unacceptable sentences, describing -/- and +/- sentences in absolute terms does not seem to be practicable.

In the method of paired comparisons described above, there was one complicating factor which requires some attention. At the level of the individual, subjects may have been inconsistent in their responses. A subject can, for instance, prefer item 1 to item 2 and 2 to 3. Consistency of judgement would require that 1 is preferred to 3. If 3 is preferred to 1, the subject has made an inconsistent choice. Nearly all subjects made some inconsistent choices, throwing some doubt on the individual orders of acceptability. These inconsistencies may come about because the subject is unable to discriminate between, in this case, the levels of acceptability of the items. Another reason could be that during testing the dimension of judgment changes. Subjects may, for instance, take into account the meaning and/or likelihood of the sentences while at other times they may prefer one sentence to the other simply because it is shorter. There are indeed many factors which may influence people when judging this type of conditionals, such as verb morphology, number of syllables in the finite verbs, the presence or absence of dan ('then'), the type of relation between the clauses, the degree of control of the speaker or even clause

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37 For a description of the analysis of paired comparison judgement tests see e.g. Swanborn (1982).
length and negation. These may cause variation with respect to the cognitive load of dealing with conditionals.

The fact that we can never know exactly what the subjects' judgements are based on need not prevent us from drawing the important conclusion that native speakers do not seem to share all of Nieuwint's intuitions about these problematic conditionals. Moreover, the subjects often do not agree among themselves either. This means that the conclusions drawn on the basis of these intuitions of a single linguist about Dutch should also be called into question.

5.8. Summary

The study of a large corpus of Dutch hypothetical conditional sentences showed that there are various factors which influence the distribution of backshifted verb forms in Dutch. Although all four possible combinations of a preterite and periphrastic conditional (zouden 'would' + inf.) occur, the use of the preterite in particular is subject to a number of limitations.

Firstly, the repartition of non-past hypothetical conditionals into present and future hypotheticals proposed in Chapter 4 has proved to be essential to a description of Dutch hypothetical conditionals. In future hypotheticals, zouden 'would' + inf. tends to be used in both clauses (+/+). In conditionals with present time reference, both the preterite and zouden can freely be used in the if-clause but here too zouden is used in most main clauses (+/+ or -/+). In hypotheticals with past forms, a pluperfect or perfect conditional can be used in either clause but a construction with a double pluperfect (-/-) is used most often.

Investigation into the workings of the factor 'clause order' revealed that the preference for +/+ in future hypotheticals largely disappears when they have a preposed main clause overtly marked for hypotheticality, which means that both +/+ and -/+ frequently occur in future if-clauses that occur finally. A relatively large number of final if-clauses was found in this time frame because nominal conditionals, i.e. conditionals of the type It would be nice if you came round tonight, tend to have future time reference and final if-clauses. However, the distribution of the four structures does not seem to differ from that in "normal" i.e. adverbal conditionals.

Another factor, mentioned by Kellerman (1989), is verb morphology. Here too, close scrutiny of the corpus material confirmed that this has an important influence on the choice of verb form. The preterite is used far more often when the finite verb is strong than when it is weak. However, many of the preterites in present if-clauses were verbs like was/waren 'was/were'and had(den) 'had', which means that frequency may also play a role here.

Although a number of important factors were dealt with in this chapter, it is not unlikely that apart from time frame, clause order and verb, factors like clause length, spoken versus written language or indeed even frequency or number of syllables of the finite verb in some way or other affect the choice of verb form in Dutch.
That there are even more combinations found than the four described above can be accounted for by means of the theoretical framework given in Chapter 4. There it was claimed that future predictive and future hypothetical conditionals are closely related, and conditionals with a present tense in one clause and *zouden* + inf. in the other were indeed fairly frequent. Another type of hybrid structure can either occur when one clause has (extended) present time reference and the other past time reference, resulting in a combination between past and non-past forms, or when past forms are used to overtly indicate the counterfactuality of one or both clauses.

As mentioned, the preterite is rare in future and present hypothetical main clauses. Although it has proved to be very difficult to fully explain this, it was argued that the ambiguity of the preterite is likely to play a role. After all, with the loss of distinctive subjunctive endings, the preterite has become ambiguous between a real past and a hypothetical non-past meaning. Conditionals like *Als je dat deed, werd je ontslagen* 'If you did that, you were fired' can be interpreted as a past habitual as well as a hypothetical conditional. That this cannot be the whole story became clear when an acceptability judgement test based on Nieuwint’s (1992) examples was carried out. It appeared that, generally speaking, conditionals which can only take on a hypothetical meaning were not considered more acceptable than some, supposedly more problematic cases. Moreover, +/- conditionals, which are unmistakably hypothetical, are even rarer and therefore more ‘mysterious’ than the -/- structures.

Although native speakers agree in some cases about the (un)acceptability of certain +/- and -/- sentences, examples taken from actual language use were also judged less acceptable than supposedly unacceptable contrived examples from the literature. Native speakers also did not agree among themselves, and during testing, they were sometimes unable to rank these awkward conditionals in order of acceptability. When it comes to judging +/- and -/- sentences, there are many factors which may be of influence but are difficult to control. In addition, their low frequency in Dutch and even more so in learner language entails that at least part of the mystery of the preterite in main clauses will have to be left unsolved.
6. Data elicitation

6.0. Introduction

In earlier discussions on investigations into the acquisition of hypothetical conditional sentences by Dutch learners, it has been argued that their tendency to insert would + infinitive in English if-clauses resulted from the fact that “learners will tend to strive for a one-to-one mapping between underlying semantic structures and surface forms in producing counterfactuals” (Wekker, Kellerman and Hermans, 1982: 39). This means that Dutch learners want to mark both clauses overtly for hypotheticality and avoid the use of the (ambiguous) preterite. This non-language-specific learner strategy and the resulting use of the if would structure have also been observed in other learner varieties of English. Dutch has a unique position in that it allows the use of both the modal preterite and the would equivalent zouden + inf. in conditional subclauses. It was, however, assumed that even though the preterite can take on a modal meaning in both languages, this does not facilitate learning and the learners rely on the “safe”, unambiguous +/- structure instead. Kellerman concludes that having an L1 like Dutch results in “a subtle form of crosslinguistic influence, in that the L1’s role is to constrain the form that the developing interlanguage may take rather than to provide a structure for copying over into the L2” (Kellerman 1989: 88). The advantage of such an explanation is that it is not language-specific and is consistent with learners’ attempts at disambiguation reported in other areas of grammar. At the same time it also matches a tendency towards morphological symmetry in conditional sentences observed in a number of other standard and non-standard languages and dialects.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the problem with this particular study, where learners produced hypothetical conditionals in both their L1 and in L2 English, is that in no less than 95% of the non-past conditionals the would equivalent zouden was used in both clauses in the L1. So not only is +/- maximally transparent (see section 3.2), it was also the preferred structure in the source language. Consequently, evidence of avoidance of the preterite in the target language (i.e. cases where individuals shifted from -/+ in Dutch to +/- in English) was rarely found.

Peels (1989) compared the acquisition of hypothetical conditionals across five language pairs and found that his transfer hypothesis was supported in relative terms, i.e. those learners whose first language does not allow a periphrastic conditional in the if-clause produced fewer if woulds than those learners whose first language does allow the use of a would equivalent. However, there was also evidence of the use of the periphrastic conditional in if-clauses produced by learners whose L1 prescribes a preterite, a phenomenon which could only result from a tendency to use unambiguous

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1. Their term counterfactual corresponds to the more general term hypothetical conditional used in the present work.

verb forms in both clauses. As far as the results of the Dutch learners are concerned, Peels also fails to isolate the role of the first language and concludes that the use of *would* in *if-* clauses results from transfer, a tendency to use unambiguous verb forms and a preference for morphological symmetry between the two clauses of the conditional sentences.

The problems with the interpretation of conditionals in the English (and French) of Dutch learners partly result from the lack of a good description of these structures in the L1. The main goal of the experiments reported on in this chapter is to find out more about the role of L1 Dutch on the basis of the analysis of hypothetical conditionals outlined in Chapter 4 and the investigation of the Dutch corpus described in Chapter 5.

It was decided that our experiment should involve both English and French as target languages as these both require the use of a preterite (*imparfait*) or pluperfect in the *if-* clause but differ with respect to their typological distance to Dutch. In this way the (possible) role of the L1 as well as the influence of *language distance* can be investigated.

The experiment was also carried out in Dutch. The aim of the Dutch version was two-fold. It was carried out (a) to check on the validity of the results found in the corpus study reported on in the previous chapter (b) to provide us with the baseline material needed to make a direct comparison between the hypothetical constructions produced by Dutch native speakers and Dutch learners of French and English.

This chapter is organised as follows: Section 6.1 deals with the method used for data elicitation. In section 6.2. the results of the Dutch version of the test are presented (6.2.1. and 6.2.2.) and compared to the findings on the Dutch corpus dealt with in the previous chapter (6.2.3.). 6.2.4. lists the hypotheses based on the new description of Dutch hypotheticals.

The results of the French and English versions of the test are presented and discussed in sections 6.3. and 6.4. Section 6.5. reports on an additional experiment carried out with advanced and highly advanced Dutch speakers of English. Finally, some general conclusions will be drawn and discussed in section 6.6.

### 6.1. Method

#### 6.1.1. Subjects

The test was administered to Dutch learners of English at three levels of proficiency, and Dutch learners of French at two levels of proficiency. First they were given the test in Dutch and between 1 and 3 weeks later they were given the same test in English or French. All testing was carried out during regular teaching periods. Level 1 consisted of a class of secondary school pupils who were in their sixth (and final) year of pre-university education (6VWO). They had received some instruction in English during

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3 Because the English test was thought to be quite difficult for the secondary school pupils, a Dutch translation of a number of what we thought were difficult words and phrases were given in brackets, e.g. *It is rumoured that (Er gaan geruchten dat)*, fence (*hek*) etc.
the last two years of primary school and nearly 6 years of English at secondary school. French was not tested at this level because the French test was thought to be too difficult for the secondary school pupils.

Level 2 consisted of first-year full-time students of English studying at the University of Amsterdam (UVA) and first-year students of French from both the UVA and the University of Nijmegen.

Level 3 were third-year students of English and third-year students of French. The third-year students of English were tested at the university of Nijmegen. The French test was again administered both in Nijmegen and in Amsterdam. Table 6.1 below gives an overview of the number of subjects that participated in the tests.\(^4\)

**Table 6.1**
The number of subjects per test, differentiated by language and level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lang. / level</th>
<th>Dutch learners of English</th>
<th>Dutch learners of French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  tot</td>
<td>2  3  tot  tot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 Dutch</td>
<td>24 84 23 131</td>
<td>L1 Dutch 45 21 66 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 English</td>
<td>23 34 22 79</td>
<td>L2 French 42 20 62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6.1.2. Material, design and procedure**
In the previous chapter it was shown that **TIME FRAME** (future, present, past), the **ORDER** of the clauses (initial versus final *if*-clause) and the **nature of the VERB** (strong versus weak) all influence the choice of verb form in Dutch hypothetical conditionals. Crossing these three factors, we end up with 12 target sentences. However, the factor VERB does not have to be varied systematically in sentences referring to past time (see section 5.2.), which resulted in the following design.

**Table 6.2**
Test design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>initial</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>str wk</td>
<td>str wk</td>
<td>str wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the sake of higher statistical validity, each combination was represented twice, resulting in 20 items per test, offered in random order. To avoid order effects and

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\(^4\) Testing was carried out between January and May. 6VWO pupils and the first year students of English were tested half-way through the academic year, the third-year students of English were tested half-way through the final semester and the students of French were tested towards the end of their first (or third) year.
copying, 10 different versions were made.

The subjects were given written instructions in Dutch. First it was explained to them that hypothetical conditionals were sentences with als ‘if’, characterized by the use of a past tense and/or zouden + inf. to indicate that they are “not real”. Then a few Dutch examples were given, and it was pointed out that subjects were not supposed to use the present tense. Finally they were simply asked to read each item carefully and to quickly fill in the missing verb forms. None of the if-clauses contained a negation and each target sentence was preceded by a situation description and/or a piece of dialogue. This not only served to establish the time reference of the conditional but it also supplied the verbs the subjects had to use. The English version of the test is given in appendix C and an example of an item from the Dutch test is given below.

(7)    Joop:    Ken jij Kees de Vries? Die werkt geloof ik bij jouw bedrijf.
Piet:   Nee, die ken ik niet en ik denk ook niet dat hij bij ons bedrijf werkt.
        Dit is een klein bedrijf.
        Als hij hier
        ik hem wel\(^5\)

Of course the exact number of missing words could not be indicated and, as Dutch is a verb second language, neither could their exact location. Moreover, the two clauses also had to be presented on separate lines. Consider the following Dutch examples with a final if-clause:

(2a)    We \textit{kochten} een auto als we rijk \textit{zouden zijn/waren}
        We bought a car if we rich \textit{would be/were}
(2b)    We \textit{zouden} een auto \textit{kopen} als we rijk \textit{waren/zouden zijn}
        We would a car \textit{buy} if we rich \textit{were/would be}

We can see that the finite verb immediately following the first constituent \textit{we} in the main clause can either be the lexical verb as in (2a) or it can be the auxiliary \textit{zouden} as in (2b), in which case we need a gap for the infinitive (\textit{kopen}).

In the Dutch version, all the possible preterite forms in the if-clauses had two syllables. This was achieved by presenting plural subjects in the if-clauses that had a strong target verb (hadden ‘had’, werden ‘became’ etc.). With the weak verbs, singular and plural could be mixed (merkte ‘noticed’, speelden ‘played’ etc.). Unfortunately, it was not possible to achieve the perfect parallel patterns in English and French in this respect. The preterite (and \textit{imparfait}) forms of the target verbs in the if-clauses are listed below.

\(^5\) The English version of this item was: Mark: ‘Do you know Kees de Vries? I think he works for your company.’ Claire: ‘No, I don’t know him and I don’t think he works with us. This is a small company so \textbf{if he here, I him.’}
Table 6.3
The preterite (imparfait) forms of the target verbs in the if-clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kregen</td>
<td>got</td>
<td>recevait</td>
<td>drukte</td>
<td>pushed</td>
<td>pressait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>werden</td>
<td>became</td>
<td>devenait</td>
<td>merken</td>
<td>noticed</td>
<td>remarquait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwamen</td>
<td>came</td>
<td>venaient</td>
<td>klopte</td>
<td>knocked</td>
<td>frappait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gingen</td>
<td>went</td>
<td>alliez</td>
<td>gebeurde</td>
<td>happened</td>
<td>arrivait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wisten</td>
<td>knew</td>
<td>savions</td>
<td>werkte</td>
<td>worked</td>
<td>travaillait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waren</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>avaient</td>
<td>speelden</td>
<td>played</td>
<td>jouaient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hadden</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>avions</td>
<td>woonde</td>
<td>lived</td>
<td>habitais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sliepen</td>
<td>slept</td>
<td>dormions</td>
<td>stuende</td>
<td>supported</td>
<td>soutenait</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the typological differences between English and Dutch on the one hand and French on the other, the notions strong and weak verb do not really apply to both types of languages in the same way. In Dutch and English the stem undergoes a change to form the preterite (e.g. get -> got). When the periphrastic conditional is used, the opposition between strong and weak verbs disappears since it always has the auxiliary would (Dutch zouden) + infinitive. French works in a different way. According to Le Bon Usage (Goosse 1993) there are two kinds of regular verbs: verbs ending in -er, and verbs ending in -ir. Their stem never changes. Those verbs where the stem does change are irregular e.g. aller ‘go’ -> je vais ‘I go’, etc. or verbs which have deviant endings. If we look at the target forms listed above, we see that in the case of the imparfait all endings are regular and immediately follow the stem which does not differ from that in the infinitive: recev(oir) -> recev(aient), deven(ir) -> deven(ait) etc.

In the case of the conditionnel, however, we find a different situation. The weak verbs indeed behave in a regular way. They all get the endings of the conditionnel immediately following the infinitive: presser -> presserait, remarquer -> remarquerait etc. The strong verbs undergo a change in the stem: deven(ir) -> deviend(rais), sav(oir) -> saur(ions) etc.8

6.2. Dutch native speakers

During testing, 197 subjects produced 3940 Dutch conditionals. Not all of them fall neatly into the four categories we are interested in (+/+,-/+,-/- or +/-). Despite the fact that the subjects had been asked not to use the present tense, many combinations of an open and a hypothetical conditional appeared. Conditionals like (3a) with a present tense in one clause and zouden + inf. in the other were also found in the Dutch corpus

---

6 Gebeuren ‘happen’ has three syllables but was added because it was difficult to find suitable verbs with two syllables which are weak in all three languages.

7 In item 10 (see appendix C) Dutch and English use the verb zijn ‘be’ where French has avoir (‘to have’).

8 Except for dormir, which behaves like a regular verb in this respect.
(see section 5.6). These have not been included in the analysis. In Dutch it is very common for one or both clauses of a hypothetical referring to present time to be marked by past time forms, a pluperfect and/or a perfect conditional (as in 3b) below. Again, these kinds of structures have already been dealt with in Chapters 4 and 5 and they have been excluded from the analysis as well.

(3a) Als zij het merkt, zou ze heel boos worden
‘If she notices it, she would get very angry’

(3b) Als we het antwoord hadden geweten, zouden we je helpen
‘If we had known the answer, we would help you’

Finally, subjects did not always use the verbs listed in Table 6.3, i.e. those supplied in the preceding context. Out of the 3940 responses, 3072 were ultimately included in the analyses (78%). Table 6.4 below gives the percentages of usable answers for the three levels and across the three time frames.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>level 1</td>
<td>131 (68.2%)</td>
<td>128 (66.7%)</td>
<td>81 (84.4%)</td>
<td>340 (70.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>774 (75.0%)</td>
<td>736 (71.3%)</td>
<td>464 (89.9%)</td>
<td>1974 (76.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 3</td>
<td>304 (86.4%)</td>
<td>291 (82.7%)</td>
<td>163 (92.6%)</td>
<td>758 (86.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1209 (76.7%)</td>
<td>1155 (73.3%)</td>
<td>708 (89.9%)</td>
<td>3072 (78.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from this table, the secondary school pupils have the most missing data in all time frames. As far as time frame is concerned, the most missing data occur with present time reference and learners sometimes produced inappropriate forms in items that had past time reference. Only 73% of the responses with present time reference could be included because a pluperfect or perfect conditional is very often used in such cases.

A MANOVA procedure was used to carry out a univariate ANOVA with repeated measures to analyse the results of the Dutch test. Four MANOVAs were needed, one for each dependent variable FORM (+/+,-/+,-/- and +/-). For the items with non-past time reference, there was one between subject variable LEVEL (level 1, level 2 and level 3) and 3 within subject factors TIME (future versus present), ORDER (initial versus final if-clause) and VERB (strong versus weak). Table 6.5 gives an overview of the main and interaction effects involved in the analyses of variance.
Table 6.5
Main and interaction effects involved in the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>main effects</th>
<th>two-way interaction effects</th>
<th>three-way interaction effects</th>
<th>four-way interaction effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>LEVEL by TIME</td>
<td>LEVEL by TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>LEVEL by TIME by ORDER by VERB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>LEVEL by TIME by VERB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>LEVEL by VERB</td>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER by VERB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>TIME by ORDER by VERB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by VERB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER by VERB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we have seen in the previous chapter, conditionals with past time reference should be dealt with separately because even though some past structures are "more popular" than others, none of the four Dutch past hypothetical alternatives seem to be problematic. In other words, the limitations on the use of ambiguous verb forms (i.e. preterite and pluperfect forms) as described in the previous chapter (section 5.7.) seem to play a much bigger role in non-past time frames. Therefore, items which involve the choice between zouden and the preterite cannot directly be compared to the choice between a pluperfect and the perfect conditional. In addition, the factor VERB is not systematically varied for items with past time reference. This means that the design for items with past time reference includes only 2 factors: one between subject factor (LEVEL), one within subject factor (ORDER).

Although this statistical analysis allows a detailed comparison between the Dutch corpus and the Dutch test, there is a difference between the proportions on which the data are analysed. As the corpus does not have any missing data, the proportions of the variable FORM (e.g. +/++) were successively contrasted with the other three structures (e.g. -/+, -/- and +/-). In the MANOVA analyses, the proportions for FORM are each time calculated on the basis of all other responses, including missing data. As a result, the MANOVA proportions of each target structure tend to be lower, as we will see in the graphs in the sections that follow.

Finally, for the sake of clarity, the tables showing the results of the MANOVAs will contain all main effects but only those interaction effects which are significant (i.e. p < .05).

6.2.1. Results: non-past
In Table 6.4. above, we can see that the Dutch native speakers produced 2364 non-past hypothetical structures (1209 future and 1155 present). Overall, +/+ was used most often (66%), followed by -/+ (29%), +/ (3%) and finally -/- (2%). MANOVA analyses
were used to analyse the effects of TIME, ORDER, VERB and LEVEL and their interactions for each of these structures.

6.2.1.1. +/-
Let us first of all look at the results for the +/- constructions, i.e. those cases where a periphrastic conditional is used in both clauses in the Dutch test.

Table 6.6
Dutch +/- (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>45.08</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.78</td>
<td>38.78</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by VERB</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by VERB</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>27.57</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER by VERB</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>38.48</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factor LEVEL is not significant, which is understandable given the fact that it was an experiment in the subjects' native language. The three other main effects are significant. In this case it means that in the test more +/- structures are used with future than with present time reference, more in initial than in final if-clauses and more with weak than with strong verbs. However, the workings of these factors require further explanation, as there are a number of significant interaction effects.

The factors TIME and ORDER interact. The difference between the two time frames is much bigger in initial than in final if-clauses. In fact, the MANOVA simple effect procedure showed that the effect for TIME is significant in initial if-clauses only (F = 69.73, p = .000). The ORDER effect is significant both for future (F = 35.71, p = .000) and for present time reference (F = 5.28, p = .023). (see Figure 6.3b). With future time reference more +/- structures are used in initial than in final if-clauses, while the reverse applies to conditionals with present time reference.

The second interaction in the test is TIME by VERB (see Figure 6.4b below). In the Dutch test only if-clauses with present time reference (F = 78.67, p = .000) show an effect for VERB, while for future time reference, no simple effect is found. In addition, the difference between future and present time reference is limited to those if-clauses which contain a strong verb (F= 66.11, p = .000).
The factors ORDER and VERB interact too (see Figure 6.5b). More +/- constructions are used with weak than with strong verbs, but only in initial if-clauses (F = 77.72, p = .000). As for the ORDER effect, there is a significant difference between initial and final if-clauses with weak verbs (F = 36.08, p = .000), while the ORDER effect is not significant with strong verbs (F = 3.21, p = .075).

In the test, the between subject factor LEVEL is not significant. However, the MANOVA analysis does show a small interaction effect between LEVEL and VERB (F = 3.27, p = .040). The verb effect is stronger for the third-year students than it is for the other two groups.

![Figure 6.1](image)

**Figure 6.1**
LEVEL by VERB: the Dutch test (+/+)

6.2.1.2. -/+ In Table 6.7 below we see that again all main effects except LEVEL are significant in the test. As -/+ and +/- are to all intents and purposes each other’s counterpart (-/- and +/- are rare) this means that more -/+ structures are used with present than with future time reference, more -/+ in final than in initial if-clauses and more -/+ with strong than with weak verbs.
Table 6.7
Dutch -/+ (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>27.49</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>71.27</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by VERB</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again the factor TIME interacts with ORDER (see Figure 6.6b below), and the TIME effect is stronger in initial than in final if-clauses. (TIME within INITIAL: F = 30.69, p = .000 and TIME within FINAL: F = 2.76, p = .098).

The ORDER effect is somewhat different from that of the +/- structures in that more -/+ is used in final if-clauses in both time frames in the Dutch test (ORDER within FUTURE: F = 77.35, p = .000 and ORDER within PRESENT: F = 26.31, p = .000).

Just as with the +/- structures, the interaction between TIME and VERB is significant (see Figure 6.7b below). It is the opposite of the pattern observed for +/- . The difference between strong and weak verbs only significantly influenced the distribution of the Dutch structures in present if-clauses (F = 18.90, p = .000) where more -/+ is used with strong than with weak verbs. The TIME effect is significant only where a strong verb occurred in the if-clause (TIME within STRONG: F = 33.97, p = .000). The factors ORDER and VERB do not interact and again there are no three-way interactions.

6.2.1.3. -/ and +/-
The only significant effect for -/ is a main effect for TIME (F = 8.08, p = .005) in the Dutch test. Although the means for both time frames are very low, more -/ constructions are used with present (mean = .021) than with future time reference (mean = .007).

The significant effects for +/- are TIME (F = 4.49, p = .035) and ORDER (F = 11.99, p = .001). Again both means are very low but more +/- constructions were used with present (mean .031) than with future time reference (mean .015) and more +/- constructions were used initially (mean .038) than finally (mean .008).

6.2.2. Results: past
In total 708 past hypothetical structures were produced by the 197 Dutch native speakers. -/+ was used most often (50%), followed by +/- (27%), -/ (19%) and finally +/- (4%). MANOVA analyses were used to analyse the effects of ORDER and LEVEL and
their interaction for each of these structures (TIME and VERB are not relevant here).

Table 6.8a
Dutch +/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8b
Dutch -/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>18.47</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8c
Dutch -/- (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>19.39</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8d
Dutch +/- (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of the +/+ structures does not vary with LEVEL or ORDER. For -/+ the order effect is significant. More -/+ structures are used when the if-clause occurs finally. However, the order effect varies across the three levels. Figure 6.2 shows that the order
effect is stronger for level 3 than it is for the other two levels.

![Figure 6.2](image-url)

**Figure 6.2**
LEVEL by ORDER: the Dutch test (-/+), past: proportions based on target structures only

The order effect for -/- was also significant; more -/- structures are used with initial than with final *if*-clauses. No effects were found for the +/- structures, which is not surprising given that they made up only 4% of the total number of target structures.

6.2.3. **Discussion: the Dutch test and the Dutch corpus compared.**
Before we compare the results of the Dutch, English and French versions of the test, we first need to find out to what extent the Dutch conditionals produced during testing are compatible with the patterns we have observed in the Dutch corpus. Tables 6.9 and 6.10 give an overview of the frequencies found for each structure in the three time frames we distinguish in the corpus and the test.
Table 6.9
Distribution of the different structures across the three time frames in the Dutch corpus. Column percentages are given in brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/+</td>
<td>163 (67%)</td>
<td>78 (33%)</td>
<td>25 (9%)</td>
<td>266 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>68 (28%)</td>
<td>118 (51%)</td>
<td>85 (31%)</td>
<td>271 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
<td>23 (10%)</td>
<td>158 (57%)</td>
<td>187 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
<td>14 (6%)</td>
<td>7 (3%)</td>
<td>27 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>243 (100%)</td>
<td>233 (100%)</td>
<td>275 (100%)</td>
<td>751 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10
The distribution of the four structures in the Dutch test. Column percentages are given in brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/+</td>
<td>896 (74%)</td>
<td>674 (58%)</td>
<td>194 (27%)</td>
<td>1764 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>279 (23%)</td>
<td>400 (35%)</td>
<td>353 (50%)</td>
<td>1032 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>10 (1%)</td>
<td>32 (3%)</td>
<td>134 (19%)</td>
<td>176 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>24 (2%)</td>
<td>49 (4%)</td>
<td>27 (4%)</td>
<td>100 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1209 (100%)</td>
<td>1155 (100%)</td>
<td>708 (100%)</td>
<td>3072 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare the test results to the frequencies found in the corpus, we see that sentences referring to future time show almost identical patterns. In the test and in the corpus, both the if-clause and the main clause tend to be marked by zouden + inf. (+/+). About one in every four if-clauses has a preterite (-/+), and main clauses with a past tense are exceptional. Sentences referring to present time show less similarity. While -/+ is most common in the corpus, we see that +/+ is favoured over -/+ (58% versus 35%) in the Dutch test and zouden + inf. is used in the test in main clauses more often as well, resulting in relatively fewer +/- and -/- structures.

This tendency to use the periphrastic conditional in this written test is particularly noticeable with sentences referring to past time. There, the test results differ considerably from the patterns observed in the corpus. Again the periphrastic conditional is used more often in both if-clauses and main clauses. On the whole, more +/- structures are used in test sentences referring to present and past time than showed up in the corpus.

Several factors may have contributed to these differences. Firstly, in the previous
chapter we have already seen that in the corpus 84% of the verbs in the *if*-clause were strong and only 16% weak. In the test, 50% of the *if*-clauses has a strong verb. In section 5.3, it was shown that strong verbs trigger the past tense more often than do weak verbs.

Secondly, we have seen in section 5.4, that although the */-/* structure is used very frequently in Dutch past hypotheticals, there is a shift to */+/* whenever the *if*-clause occurs finally. In other words, the pluperfect does not tend to be used in preposed main clauses. Since 50% of all conditionals in the test had a final *if*-clause while in the corpus only 26% of the conditionals with past time reference occurred finally, this may well have contributed to the relatively low number of */-/* structures in the Dutch test.\(^9\)

Finally, the discrepancy between the test and the corpus is limited to present and past time because (initial) *if*-clauses referring to the future often need *zouden* + inf. in order to be acceptable to most speakers of Dutch, while both */+/* and */+/* structures are always acceptable with present and past time reference. In other words, the overuse of *zouden* + inf. cannot reveal itself in those contexts where many Dutch speakers may feel it is the only possibility anyway.

Although the raw figures for the test differed somewhat from those of the corpus, we can still compare the effects of the factors *TIME* (future, present, past), *ORDER* (initial versus final *if*-clause) and *VERB* (strong versus weak) as described in sections 5.3. and 5.4. to the effects found in the test and listed in the previous section.

In non-past time frames, all three main effects are significant in both the test and the corpus for both the */+/* and the */-/* structures. This means that in both the test and the corpus more */+/* structures are used with future than with present time reference, more in initial than in final *if*-clauses and more with weak than with strong verbs, while the reverse applies to */-/* structures.

In both the test and the corpus, *TIME* interacts with *ORDER* for */+/*. Figures 6.3a and 6.3b show that in both cases the time effect is much bigger in initial *if*-clauses. While it is true that */+/* is strongly preferred in future *if*-clauses, the test confirms that this time effect is largely neutralized once the *if*-clause occurs finally. In other words, the preterite is used more freely in *if*-clauses preceded by a main clause marked by *zouden* + inf. in the written test too.

---

\(^9\) The subjects participating in the Dutch test may also have used *zouden* + inf. frequently simply as a result of what could be described as “the automatic pilot effect”. Filling in the verb forms in this test was a metalinguistic activity. All items involved the formation of conditional sentences. Some subjects, particularly the 6VWO pupils, started out using the “safe” */+/* structure (see section 5.1.) and stuck to it.
In section 5.3, we have seen that more +/ structures occur with weak than with strong verbs in both time frames in the corpus and although Figure 6.4a shows that the verb effect is stronger for conditionals with present time reference, the interaction effect was not significant. In the Dutch test, only if-clauses with present time reference show an effect for verb and the difference between future and present time reference is clearly limited to those if-clauses containing a strong verb.
As mentioned in section 5.3., only a few if-clauses in the corpus contained a weak verb. As a result, some of the frequencies on which Figure 6.4a are based are very small. However, the additional data from the Dutch test suggest that because the tendency to use */+ is stronger for future time reference to begin with, the verb effect has a bigger
impact in present time frames: strong (and usually more frequent) verbs trigger the preterite (was, had, wist 'knew') while with weak verbs zouden + inf. is more often used (zou wonen ‘would live’, zou spelen ‘would play’, zou steunen ‘would support’ etc.).

ORDER interacted with VERB in both the test and the corpus and Figures 6.5a and 6.5b show a striking resemblance.

---

**Figure 6.5a**

ORDER by VERB: the Dutch corpus (+/+)

---

**Figure 6.5b**

ORDER by VERB: the Dutch test (+/+)

The VERB effect in Dutch is limited to initial if-clauses and the ORDER effect is stronger for if-clauses whose finite verb is weak. On the basis of the main effects only, one
would expect two parallel lines, where the line for weak verbs would lie above that for strong verbs (more +/- weak than strong) and both lines would go down (more +/- initially than finally). This first prediction is indeed confirmed by both Figures 6.5a and 6.5b. The lines for strong verbs, however, do not go down; there is no ORDER effect. This means that the suggestion made in section 6.3.2. is confirmed by the written test. +/- and +/- structures are not used frequently by Dutch native speakers and occur almost exclusively in initial if-clauses where the finite verb is strong. As a result, it is in those conditions only that +/- and +/- are used at the expense of the other structures.

For the +/- structures as well, time interacted with order for both the corpus (Figure 6.6a) and the test (Figure 6.6b).

![Figure 6.6a](image_url)

**Figure 6.6a**
TIME by ORDER: the Dutch corpus (-/+)

![Figure 6.6b](image_url)

**Figure 6.6b**
TIME by ORDER: the Dutch test (-/+)

The interaction of **time** and **order** is significant both in the corpus and the test even though fewer -/+ structures were used in the test overall, for reasons discussed above. As we saw with the +/- structures, the difference between the two time frames is bigger in initial than in final if-clauses. In the corpus, the order effect is limited to if-clauses with future time reference while in the test, more -/+ is used in final if-clauses regardless of time frame, although the order effect is stronger for conditionals with future time reference.

Figure 6.7b below shows that the interaction of time and verb in the test is the exact opposite of that found for +/+. As a result of the small number of weak verbs in the corpus, the interaction effect is not significant, although the verb effect seems to be slightly stronger for present time reference.

---

**Figure 6.7a**
TIME by VERB: the Dutch corpus (-/+)

---

**Figure 6.7b**
TIME by VERB: the Dutch test (-/+)

As in the Dutch corpus, few -/- and +/- structures were produced in the test. The data from the corpus suggested that most of the -/- and +/- structures that do occur have present time reference and an initial if-clause, but no significant effects were found in the logit analyses. In the Dutch test, however, these tendencies are confirmed by statistical analyses: a TIME effect was found for -/- and both TIME and ORDER were significant for +/-.

The most important difference between the corpus and the test is the use of the double pluperfect (-/-) in past time frames; it is the most common structure in the corpus, whereas -/+ is preferred in the test. Despite this difference, however, the test did confirm that -/- structures are used more often when the if-clause occurs initially; with final if-clauses there is a shift to -/++. In other words, native speakers of Dutch tend to avoid the use of a pluperfect in a preposed main clause.

From the above we can conclude that the results of the analysis of the corpus are to a large extent confirmed by the results of the Dutch test. Not only do the main effects match, but the interactions of TIME, ORDER and VERB were also very similar despite the fact that the corpus consists of spontaneous spoken and written language and the test data are the result of written, metalinguistic activity. These results show that the Dutch test indeed provides us with a suitable baseline for comparison between native speaker data and data from Dutch learners of French and English.

6.2.4. Hypotheses
On the basis of the earlier research described in section 6.1. and the semantic description of Dutch hypothetical conditionals outlined in Chapter 5 and section 6.2. above, the following hypotheses can be formulated.

(I) The Transparency/Morphological Symmetry Hypotheses independently proposed by Wekker et al. 1982; Kellerman 1989:

Dutch learners of English and French will use the +/- structure in the target language irrespective of their preferences in Dutch.

(II) The Transfer Hypothesis:

The distribution of the incorrect +/- and correct -/+ structures in the target languages will mirror that of their structural equivalents in Dutch conditional sentences.

We can now use the results described in the previous section to make more detailed predictions. If learners of English and French mark if-clauses as they would in Dutch, this will result in more +/- structures in future time frames than in present time frames. In Chapter 5 we saw that -/- is the structure which is most frequent in hypotheticals with past time reference. Transfer of this distribution will result in the use of a pluperfect in both clauses (-/-). However, as already has been pointed out in earlier research (e.g. Kellerman 1989), the errors made by the Dutch are generally restricted
to the if-clauses only, and failure to use would in main clauses is rare.

The order of the clauses is another important factor which influences the
distribution of the different structures in Dutch. This difference between sentences with
initial and final if-clauses is less pronounced in present time frames than it is in future
time reference.

In non-past time frames, there is one other important factor which needs to be
considered here. The nature of the verb (strong vs weak) is also of some influence on
the choice between zouden + inf. and the past tense in Dutch. In past time frames, this
factor will not play a role since the main verb takes on the form of a past participle e.g.,
had gedaan ‘had done’ (strong) vs had gemerkt ‘had noticed’ (weak). As for non-past
time frames, the figures suggest that strong verbs trigger a past tense more often than
do weak verbs. Dutch learners of English and French then, may find it easier to deal
with (highly frequent) strong verbs in the if-clause, i.e., they will produce fewer if
woulds /si -rais especially if the conditional has present time reference.

In the corpus and the test there was an interaction between ORDER and VERB. Its
explanation involved the presence of +/- and +/- structures in conditionals with initial
if-clauses and strong verbs. Since we do not expect structures with a preterite in the
main clause in learner language, it is hypothesized that this effect will not play a role.

We can now restate the transfer hypothesis as follows:

- More +/- structures will be produced when the time frame is future than when it is
  present and this difference between the two time frames will be particularly noticeable
  when the if-clause occurs initially.
- More +/- structures will be produced where the if-clause occurs initially, particularly
  in if-clauses with future time reference.
- More +/- structures will be produced with weak than with strong verbs, particularly
  with present time reference.

Since the learners’ errors will be mostly limited to the if-clauses, an increase in +/-
structures implies a decrease in +/- structures and vice versa. It needs to be added here
that the predictions below are stated in terms of ‘more +/- than...’ because a learner
who uses the correct form may either be lucky (transfer of the Dutch structure led
him/her to the correct target language structure) or the learner’s correct structure may
simply result from his/her knowledge about English (or French) hypothetical if-clauses.

It should be remembered that the disambiguation hypothesis states that advanced
Dutch learners of English and French tend to transfer the Dutch default structure in
order to avoid using the preterite. Of course, knowledge about the target language can
result in the use of the correct forms here as well, the difference being that these two
tendencies (towards disambiguation or correctness) result either in the erroneous use
of would (or the conditionnel) or in correctness, regardless of the form which would
be used/preferred in Dutch.
6.3. Dutch learners of French

In total 1240 (62 * 20) French conditionals were produced. Out of the 1240 conditional structures, 892 (71.9%) were included in the analyses. In other words, 28% of the responses consisted of missing data. The first-year students were less able to produce the hypothetical target structures than the more advanced third-year students. This difference is particularly noticeable in the items with past time reference, where only 60.7% of the items could be included in the analysis.

**Table 6.11**
The percentage of responses included in the analysis of the French test, for level and time frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st years</td>
<td>224 (66.7%)</td>
<td>254 (75.6%)</td>
<td>102 (60.7%)</td>
<td>580 (69.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd years</td>
<td>120 (75.0%)</td>
<td>125 (78.1%)</td>
<td>67 (83.8%)</td>
<td>312 (78.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>344 (69.4%)</td>
<td>379 (76.4%)</td>
<td>169 (68.1%)</td>
<td>892 (71.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.12**
The distribution of the four structures in the French test. Column percentages are given in brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>66 (19.2%)</td>
<td>57 (15.0%)</td>
<td>25 (14.8%)</td>
<td>148 (16.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>264 (76.7%)</td>
<td>299 (78.9%)</td>
<td>131 (77.5%)</td>
<td>694 (77.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>11 (3.2%)</td>
<td>19 (5.0%)</td>
<td>12 (7.1%)</td>
<td>42 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>3 (0.9%)</td>
<td>4 (1.1%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td>8 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>344 (100%)</td>
<td>379 (100%)</td>
<td>169 (100%)</td>
<td>892 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When target structures are produced, the students of French do quite well overall; The conditionnel is used in both clauses (+/+), in only 16.6% of the cases, The imparfait/plusqueparfait are hardly ever used in the main clause, as was the case with their Dutch equivalents. Again MANOVA analyses were carried out to investigate the effects of LEVEL, TIME, ORDER and VERB for items with non-past time frames (section 6.3.1.) and LEVEL and ORDER for the items with past time reference (section 6.3.2.).
6.3.1. Results: non-past
Although 4 MANOVA analyses were carried out, one for each structure, only +/+ and -/+ structures will be dealt with since -/- and +/- were hardly used at all and none of the effects were significant.

6.3.1.1. +/+ 
All main effects and significant interaction effects for the +/+ construction are given in Table 6.13 below.

Table 6.13
French +/+ (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by TIME by ORDER by VERB</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, none of the main effects are significant. The MANOVA analysis does report a third order interaction effect: LEVEL by TIME by ORDER by VERB (F = 4.3, p = .043) (but see below).

6.3.1.2. +/- 
The fact that no significant effects are observed for the +/+ structures could be attributed to the fact that the proportions of +/- are relatively low. At first sight, the effects for +/-, reported in Table 6.14, suggest that there is much more variation.
Table 6.14
French -/+ (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by VERB</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>12.73</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER BY VERB</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from Table 6.14, the effect for TIME was significant, which means that more correct (-/+ ) structures are used in if-clauses with present than with future time reference. None of the other main effects are significant. The MANOVA does, however report a number of interaction effects which show a different picture from what we saw in Dutch. If we take the interaction of TIME by ORDER for instance (Figure 6.8), we see that the difference between the two time frames is bigger in final than in initial if-clauses. Also, the proportion -/+ structures with future time reference is smaller for final than for initial if-clauses.

![Figure 6.8](image)

TIME by ORDER: the French test (-/+ )
In Figure 6.9 below the interaction effect is again such that it rules out an L1-based explanation. Unlike what we saw in Dutch, the TIME effect is limited to those if-clauses which have a weak verb, and the VERB effect for present time reference is the opposite of what we saw in Dutch. This means that another explanation for these effects has to be found.

![Figure 6.9](image)

**Figure 6.9**
TIME by VERB: the French test -/+  

### 6.3.1.3. Target structures only

In section 6.2, it was pointed out that fluctuations of the proportions of missing data across the items can influence the results of the MANOVA analyses. Closer inspection of the French data shows that this is the source of unexpected interaction effects observed in French.

It was found that the students of French found some items of the test particularly difficult to deal with. No less than 45.2% of the answers to item 8 were missing, while this percentage was only 9.7% for item 12.

Removal of the missing data results in proportions of +/+ and -/+ which remain almost constant, regardless of TIME, ORDER and VERB, and the unexpected MANOVA interaction effects disappear, as we can see in Figures 6.10, 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13 below (the raw figures as well as the proportions on which these figures are based are listed in appendix D). Moreover, the small amount of variation that can be seen is not in accordance with the patterns we found in our Dutch data.
Figure 6.10
TIME by ORDER: the French test (-/+) proportions based on target structures only

Figure 6.11
TIME by VERB: the French test (-/+) proportions based on target structures only
Figure 6.12
TIME by ORDER: the French test (+/+), proportions based on target structures only

Figure 6.13
time by verb: the French test (+/+) proportions based on target structures only
6.3.2. Results: past

In Table 6.11 above we have seen that the percentage of structures amenable to analysis (i.e. +/+, -/+, -/- or +/-) is 68% for French. The means that learners have more trouble producing past hypothetical conditionals in the target language than they do in their native language, where 90% of the answers could be included in the analysis. However, once past hypothetical forms are produced, it is very often the correct target language structure (77.5% -/+ ) and, as a result, the number of double would constructions was limited (15%). The -/- structure, which is frequently used in the L1, is rarely used in the target language, which means that in past time frames too, the learners’ problems concern hypothetical if-clauses, rather than hypothetical main clauses.

Table 6.15a
French +/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.15b
French -/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.15c
French -/- (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The only significant effect found for the past hypothetical structures was a LEVEL effect for -/+: the first year students produce fewer correct forms than the third-year students. The proportions based on target structures only show that this difference is not due to varying amounts of missing data. The first years produced 69.6% -/+ and the third-years 89.6%.

6.3.3. Discussion: Dutch L1 and French L2 compared

No evidence for the transfer hypothesis was found in the hypothetical conditionals produced by Dutch learners of French, nor was there a level difference in non-past time frames. In past time frames, third-year students do outperform first-year students, who not only produce fewer -/+ structures but failed to produce past hypothetical structures more often.

It could be argued that the reason no transfer effects were found is due to the limited number of -/+ structures overall. However, the data clearly showed that even strong, stable factors in Dutch, such as the major difference between the two time frames in initial if-clauses, was absent from the learner data. This means we have to conclude that the use of the -/+ structure is the result of a tendency towards transparency and/or morphological symmetry as described by Wekker et al 1982; Kellerman 1989; Peels 1989.

Another important characteristic of the French data were the considerable fluctuations in missing data across the 20 items. Not only are these fluctuations bigger than those in the Dutch test, they are also less systematic. In the Dutch test, the missing data mainly consisted of cases where the present tense was used in future conditionals and past hypothetical forms were used to mark present counterfactuals. While these tendencies could also be found in French, relatively many missing data did not fit these patterns and other inappropriate tense forms were used. The future tense, for instance, which is extremely rare in Dutch if-clauses, was used by the learners. In addition, past forms were filled in in non-past contexts and vice versa, or no (recognizable) tense forms were supplied at all.
6.4. Dutch learners of English

During testing, 1580 (79 * 20) English conditional sentences were produced. Again many open conditionals occurred despite the fact that the learners had been asked not to use the present tense. As in Dutch, the if-clause and/or main clause was often marked by means of a pluperfect and/or would have + inf. in the items with present time reference. These were excluded from the analysis as well and again the subjects did not always use the verbs supplied to them in each item.

Table 6.16
The percentage of responses included in the analysis of the English test, for level and time frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6VWO</td>
<td>86 (46.7%)</td>
<td>103 (56.0%)</td>
<td>43 (46.7%)</td>
<td>232 (50.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st years</td>
<td>194 (71.3%)</td>
<td>199 (73.2%)</td>
<td>116 (85.3%)</td>
<td>509 (74.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd years</td>
<td>119 (67.6%)</td>
<td>134 (76.1%)</td>
<td>72 (81.8%)</td>
<td>325 (73.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>399 (63.1%)</td>
<td>436 (69.0%)</td>
<td>231 (73.1%)</td>
<td>1066 (67.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from this table, the 6VWO pupils produce the lowest percentage of "usable" structures. The figures for levels 2 and 3 do not differ much in this respect. The responses are distributed as follows:

Table 6.17
The distribution of the four structures in the English test. Column percentages are given in brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>116 (29.1%)</td>
<td>92 (21.1%)</td>
<td>44 (19.0%)</td>
<td>252 (23.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/+</td>
<td>275 (68.9%)</td>
<td>328 (75.2%)</td>
<td>179 (77.5%)</td>
<td>782 (73.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/-</td>
<td>5 (1.2%)</td>
<td>11 (2.5%)</td>
<td>4 (1.7%)</td>
<td>20 (1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>5 (1.1%)</td>
<td>4 (1.7%)</td>
<td>12 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>399 (100%)</td>
<td>436 (100%)</td>
<td>231 (100%)</td>
<td>1066 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the learners use far more correct forms (-/++) than could be expected on the basis of the distributional patterns observed in Dutch. In if-clauses with future time reference, 69% -/+ is used against 23% -/+ in the Dutch test and in if-clauses with present time reference, 75% -/+ (against 35% in the Dutch test). Most English -/+
constructions are used with past time reference (77%) where the Dutch test only had 50% -/+. Clearly there is a good deal of “knowledge” present and far fewer +/- constructions are used in English than in Dutch. As expected, the preterite and pluperfect is hardly ever used in hypothetical main clauses; +/- and -/- structures are rare in all time frames.

Despite the fact that in this form-focussed test relatively many correct structures are produced, we can investigate if the same distributional patterns we saw in Dutch can be found in the English data.

6.4.1. Results: non-past

6.4.1.1. +/-

Let us first of all look at the MANOVA main and interaction effects for the +/- constructions, i.e. those cases where would + inf. is used in both clauses:

| Table 6.18 | English +/- (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| +/-         | SS  | df | MS  | F    | p    |
| LEVEL       | 6.17| 2  | 3.08| 7.16 | .001 |
| TIME        | .20 | 1  | .20 | 3.48 | .066 |
| ORDER       | .34 | 1  | .34 | 4.04 | .048 |
| VERB        | .26 | 1  | .26 | 8.82 | .004 |
| LEVEL by ORDER | .72 | 2  | .36 | 4.25 | .018 |

As we can see from Table 6.18, VERB and LEVEL are significant at the 1% level and ORDER at the 5% level. On average, the proportion of +/- constructions that is used with weak verbs is higher than that with strong verbs and more +/- is used in initial than in final if-clauses. More +/- is used with future than with present time reference but this effect was only marginally significant (p = .066). The LEVEL effect is significant. The third-years produce hardly any if woulds at all and the 6VWO pupils produce fewer than the first-year students. Because of these LEVEL differences, there is a significant interaction between LEVEL and ORDER. The effect is mainly caused by the ceiling effect of the third-years. They perform so well that the effects for ORDER (and the other factors: TIME and VERB) cannot be measured.

6.4.1.2. -/-

This ceiling effect also caused a number of interactions in the analysis of the -/- (correct) structures listed in Table 6.19 below.
Table 6.19
English -/+ (non-past): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>9.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by TIME by ORDER</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME by ORDER by VERB</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The order by level effect is visualized in Figure 6.14. It is clear that while levels 1 and 2 behave as expected (more correct forms in final if-clauses), the third years almost exclusively produce correct forms. The fact that the line showing their ceiling effect lies around 68% is mainly due to the number of missing data we have seen in Table 6.16. The proportion of correct forms for the third-years based on “usable” answers only is 94% (with only 6% +/-).
6.4.1.3. +/+: Levels 1 and 2 only
Because of the appearance of the interactions caused by the ceiling effect, it was decided to re-examine the results for the other two groups and to (temporarily) exclude the third-years from the analysis.

Table 6.20
English +/+ (non-past, levels 1 and 2): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 6.20 indicate that there are significant main effects for TIME, VERB and LEVEL. The ORDER effect was only marginally significant. Again the effects point in the same direction as we saw in the Dutch analyses: There are more +/+ structures with future than with present time reference, more +/- with weak than with strong verbs and more +/- with initial than with final if-clauses. Surprisingly, the secondary school pupils (level 1) produced fewer if would structures than the first year students. The only significant interaction effect was LEVEL by ORDER. In this case it means that the order effect is observed with the first-year students only.

6.4.1.4. -/+: levels 1 and 2 only
What is striking here is that there is no LEVEL effect. In the previous section we saw that the 1st-year students produce more if woulds (+/+) than the secondary school pupils but Table 6.21 gives the main effects for the number of correct English forms used by the first two levels only and shows that the students do not, on average, produce fewer correct forms (-/+). Another difference between +/- and -/+ is the VERB effect, which is not significant here. The factors TIME and ORDER have the same effect we saw in Dutch. There were more correct (-/) structures with present than with future time reference and more -/+ with final than with initial if-clauses. The only significant interaction effect is TIME by LEVEL (F = 5.16, p = .027).
Table 6.21
English -/+ (non-past, levels 1 and 2): results of the analysis of variance (main effects and significant interaction effects only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>23.97</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by TIME</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.15
TIME by LEVEL: the English test levels 1 and 2 only, -/+ 

The difference between the two levels is only significant with future time reference and the TIME effect is only significant for the 6VWO pupils (p = .001). They produce more correct (-/+ ) structures with present time reference. There are no significant effects for -/- or +/-. As expected, the proportions of -/- and +/- were very small. As mentioned in the previous section, no -/- or +/- structures were produced by the third-years at all. The other two groups sporadically produced these structures but the numbers are far too low for any significant effects to be found.
6.4.1.5 English levels 1 and 2: target structures only
The problem with the MANOVA analyses already touched upon in sections 6.2. and 6.3. is that the varying proportion of missing data across the items can influence the results. In Table 6.16 we saw that for the secondary school pupils (level 1) around 50% of the answers consist of missing data, while only a quarter of the data produced by the first-year and third-year students do not belong to one of the four structures we are interested in. The means that the proportions +/+,-/+, -/- and +/- based on all answers (including missing data) are lower for level 1 to begin with. It was therefore decided to investigate the variance of the (-/+ and (+/+ structures based on the target structures only (the raw figures as well as the proportions on which these figures are based are listed in appendix D). After removal of the missing data, the difference between levels 1 and 2 increases. Not only do the secondary school pupils (level 1) produce fewer if woulds (22.7% against 37.9%), they also produce more correct forms (73.5% against 57.8% for the first-year students). The other (interaction) effects were also analysed after removal of the missing data. Figure 6.16 below shows that TIME and CLAUSE ORDER interact in a way which is very similar to the pattern observed in Dutch (Figure 6.5), that is, more -/+ structures in final than in initial if-clauses with a slightly bigger increase for future time reference. As -/+ and +/+ are each other’s counterparts, Figure 6.17 shows the opposite pattern.

Figure 6.16
TIME by ORDER: the English test (-/+ levels 1 and 2, proportions based on target structures only

---

10 Several bootstrap analyses were carried out on the basis of the target structures only. It was found that the difference between levels 1 and 2 was indeed significant both for +/+ (z = 3.953) and for -/+ (z = 3.963).

11 Bootstrap analyses reported a time effect for both levels. The effect for level 1 was stronger (+/+ z = 3.250 and -/+ z = 2.841) and for level 2 it was significant in initial if-clauses only (+/+ z = 2.099 and -/+ z = 2.993).
Figure 6.17
TIME by ORDER: the English test (+/+) levels 1 and 2, proportions based on target structures only

Figure 6.17 differs from the Dutch pattern for +/+ in that both lines go down, which means that fewer +/+ constructions are used in final if-clauses in both time frames (cf Figure 6.2)

Figure 6.18
TIME by VERB: the English test (+/+), levels 1 and 2, proportions based on target structures only

The interaction of TIME by VERB (Figure 6.18) also resembles the Dutch pattern more
strongly than could be expected on the basis of the MANOVA analyses. The verb effect seems to be limited to conditionals with present time reference and the time effect is stronger for if-clauses containing strong verbs (cf Figure 6.1).

6.4.2. Results: Past
There was only one significant effect for the +/+ structures: a LEVEL effect in English (F = 3.16, p = .048). This is not caused by variation in the numbers of missing data. Even after the removal of missing data, there is a big difference between levels 1 and 2 on the one hand (26% +/+ each) and level 3 (4% +/+ ) on the other. This same LEVEL effect was, of course, also found for the correct English structures -/+ (F = 10.05, p = .000).

Table 6.22a
English +/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.22b
English -/+ (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.22c
English -/- (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 The bootstrap analyses confirmed that the verb effect is stronger in present counterfactual if-clauses. This was particularly clear for level 1 (+/+ z = -2.200 and -/+ z = -2.169), while the time effect was limited to if-clauses with strong verbs (+/+ z = 2.993) for level 2.
Table 6.22d
English +/- (past): results of the analysis of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDER</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL by ORDER</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.3. Discussion: Dutch L1 and English L2 compared
The learners of English produced *if would* constructions 23.6% of the time overall but this figure varied considerably across the three levels and the three time frames. In non-past time frames, Level 1 did better than Level 2 (23% and 38% +/- respectively) while in past time frames there was no difference between these groups (26% for both levels). The highly advanced third-year students produced hardly any erroneous structures at all (6% non past and 4% past). Because of this ceiling effect, it was decided to exclude this group and carry out a second analysis.

Despite the fact that there was a good deal of knowledge present in the remaining two groups, there was also clear evidence of transfer effects. The main effects in the non-past time frames were very similar to those found in Dutch: more +/- was used with future than with present time reference, more +/- in initial than in final *if*-clauses (level 2 only) and more +/- with weak than with strong verbs. After elimination of the "noise" caused by varying proportions of missing data, the effects resembled the Dutch data even more closely and most of the interaction effects found in Dutch also played a role in learner English. The difference between the two time frames was bigger in initial than in final *if*-clauses and was limited to *if*-clauses with strong verbs. The verb effect itself was particularly noticeable with present time reference.

Hypothetical conditionals with past time reference proved to be least problematic for our learners (19% +/- overall). This is not surprising if we take into account that -/+ was the preferred structure in the written test in Dutch too. The ORDER effect found in Dutch is absent from the English data. This ORDER effect involves a drop in the proportion of -/+ structures whenever *if*-clauses occur finally and -/+ structures are used instead. As -/+ does not seem to be an option for Dutch learners of English, this effect does not show up in learner language.

On the basis of these data we can conclude that the learners’ tendency to overtly mark *if*-clauses for hypotheticality by means of a periphrastic conditional can, for a large part, be traced back to their L1. The use of the ambiguous preterite is not avoided, as suggested by the transparency hypothesis; it is freely used in contexts where it can be freely used in Dutch, while the *if would* structure is more often found in those subtypes were *zouden* is strongly preferred in Dutch. This means that Kellerman’s (1992) hypothesis that conditionals with explicit future time reference would be particularly problematic is supported but for different reasons than has hitherto been assumed. The idea behind this refinement of the disambiguation hypothesis was that
learners (in general) are least willing to use the ambiguous preterite in future hypotheticals because it is in those contexts that the distance between the prototypical meaning (real past time) and the secondary meaning (hypothetical future time) is particularly difficult to deal with. However, this is not sufficient to account for the data obtained from Dutch learners. After all, the Dutch learners did produce preterites with future time reference in final if-clauses and the fact that the Dutch distributional patterns were mirrored suggests that the first language plays a crucial role and the data cannot be interpreted in terms of general learner strategies only.

Interestingly, the fact that zouden is strongly preferred in Dutch in contexts where speakers feel they should avoid the (ambiguous) preterite (i.e. future initial if-clauses) means that disambiguation as described by Kellerman (1989, 1992) does help account for the tendencies in L1 Dutch, which advanced learners then transfer to L2 English.

6.5. Guided conversation

6.5.1. Introduction
In the previous sections, we discussed a written, quantitative test on the acquisition of hypothetical conditionals. We have seen that there was clear evidence of transfer in the hypothetical conditionals produced by Dutch learners of English. However, these effects were only observed among secondary school pupils and first-year university students. There was a ceiling effect for the group of highly advanced third-year students. For this reason it was decided to conduct an additional experiment, designed to elicit (semi) spontaneous speech from advanced and highly advanced Dutch learners of English to see whether those same transfer effects occur, and to find out to what extent such Dutch learners are able to form correct hypothetical if-clauses when they are not focussed on form.

6.5.2. Subjects, material, design and procedure
During the written test, the subjects were simply asked to fill in the verb forms and there was no time pressure. However, the third-year students hardly made any errors at all. Therefore it was decided to generate more authentic data that could also serve as check on the validity of the off-line written data. As hypothetical conditionals do not occur often in spontaneous speech (or writing), there was no suitable corpus of learner language available and a way had to be found to collect a sufficient number of hypothetical structures in a short period of time, without modelling the correct forms.\footnote{The International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), which is being compiled at the Université catholique de Louvain, was investigated but did not yield enough data. The Dutch-English sub-corpus consisted of 59,028 words of written learner English but only 11 hypothetical conditionals were found, one of which contained an erroneous if would construction.}

In order to achieve this, an interview was designed, based on an exercise from Hollett, Carter, Lyon and Tanner (1991). This exercise was a very suitable starting point as it was designed to help learners practise with hypothetical constructions by means of items like the following:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{NB:} What did you do yesterday?
\item \textbf{NB:} What would you have done if you had been working yesterday?
\end{itemize}
It is unlikely to happen but in what situations might you, for instance, send food back in a restaurant/go on strike...? (Hollet, Carter, Lyon and Tanner 1991: 55)

The exercise was adapted and hypothetical questions with past time reference were added e.g. *Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have dropped out of high-school?*

In order to prevent the subjects’ attention being drawn to (their use of) hypothetical conditionals, distractors were added (e.g. *Would you discuss the following subjects with a fellow student of the opposite sex? your likes and dislikes in music, your income, your views on ultra-right political movements etc.*14) and the whole test was presented as “an interview on cross-cultural differences with respect to politeness and received standards of behaviour” (The complete list of questions is given in appendix E).

The first 10 interviews were conducted in Dutch and served as a pilot study, on the basis of which some items were changed and a few more items were added. The English interviews were conducted by three paid female native speakers, two from the USA and one from Canada, who were studying in the Netherlands as part of an exchange programme. Like the participants, they were not informed about the true purpose of the interviews because we wanted to prevent either interlocutor focussing on the use and form of hypothetical constructions. The interviewers were instructed to tell the participants that they were doing a project on cultural differences.

Fifty-two full-time Dutch students of English at the University of Nijmegen volunteered to take part in the interviews and were paid a small fee. There were 32 women and 30 men, whose ages ranged from 18 to 26. Finally, 4 native speakers of English were interviewed in their native language (Table 6.23).

**Table 6.23**
The number of subjects per test, differentiated by level and language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>native speakers</th>
<th>university learners of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch English</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} years 2\textsuperscript{nd} years 3\textsuperscript{rd} years 4\textsuperscript{th} years 5\textsuperscript{th} years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 4</td>
<td>21 4 19 7 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews took between 10 and 25 minutes and were all conducted in the same room at the Department of Dutch at the University of Nijmegen. The subjects were seated opposite the interviewer at the same table. A microphone was placed on the table and the subjects were told that the interviews would be recorded onto tape. All relevant passages, i.e. all conditional sentences and their contexts, were subsequently transcribed.

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14 These distractor questions are based on van Betteraij, Kellerman & Schils (1996)
6.5.3. The elicitation of hypothetical conditionals
Since the questions asked by the interviewer were hypothetical main clauses (Q), the answers (A) tended to contain hypothetical if-clauses only (e.g. example (4) below). For this reason it was decided that only the verb forms in the if-clauses should be coded (+/-) even where a main clause was produced (example (5)). This was not felt to be a disadvantage because, as we have seen in the previous sections, hypothetical main clauses are generally unproblematic for Dutch learners of English. This was again confirmed by the results of the interviews. All hypothetical main clauses that were used were formed correctly.

Although the questions were designed to elicit hypothetical if-clauses from our subjects, it was very often the case that the hypothetical question was answered without the use of any (hypothetical) forms relevant to this study (e.g. example (6) below).

(4) Q In what situations would you give a false name to the police?
A Never, only if I knew I wouldn't get, only if I knew I wouldn't get caught
(5) Q Under which circumstances would you have chosen a different branch of studies?
A Well, if my parents hadn't pushed me so hard to go on through to university, I'd probably have taken a year out and I would have chosen something completely different (...) 
(6) Q In what situations would you drink and drive?
A Oh, I don’t have my driver’s licence yet and I don’t think I'd ever drink and drive because no, never because the risk is too big, especially in a place like Holland, where it’s so crowded. It’s probably different in America.

In total, the 52 subjects produced 425 hypothetical if-clauses (8.17 per person). The range was 0-25. A t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between the average number of if-clauses produced across the two levels of competence that are distinguished (level 1: first and second-year students and level 2: third- fourth- and fifth-year students) (t = -.355, df = 50, p = .724).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>hyp. if-clause</th>
<th>average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>level 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>8.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>8.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the interviewers had not been informed about the true purpose of the project, they
too sometimes used hypothetical if-clauses during conversation.

(6) Q In what situations would you send food back in a restaurant?
A When it’s cold or when I really didn’t like it
Q If you didn’t like the quality of the food?
A yeah

(7) A What, steal? I wouldn’t do that.
Q What if you were starving and had three children to feed and had no money?
A Oh, yes, well in that case for no other reason, like, not if I wanted a cd or something (...)

The interviewers did not use would in any of their non-past if-clauses but there was one case with past time reference where a native speaker deviated from the target language norm (see section 6.5.8. below)

6.5.4. Level
419 out of the 425 hypothetical or if-clauses were included in the analysis. Hypothetical conditional clauses containing should or were to were excluded. In total 114 if-clauses contained a periphrastic conditional or a perfect conditional, i.e. would + infinitive (27.2%) while 305 (72.8%) if-clauses contained a preterite or pluperfect. These percentages are surprisingly similar to the overall results of the form-focussed, written English test, where 25% of the if-clauses had would while 75% contained a preterite or pluperfect.15

Table 6.25
Hypothetical if-clauses produced, differentiated by verb FORM and LEVEL (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>level 1</th>
<th>level 2</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>55 (28.4)</td>
<td>59 (26.2)</td>
<td>114 (27.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/</td>
<td>139 (71.6)</td>
<td>166 (73.8)</td>
<td>305 (72.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>194 (100)</td>
<td>225 (100)</td>
<td>419 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we look at the results across the two levels, however, the results of the written test are radically different from the those of the interviews. In the written, form-focussed test we saw that the highly advanced third-year students hardly made any errors at all. During the interviews, however, there is no significant difference between the two levels ($\chi^2$ (pearson) = .238 df 1, p = .625).

15 These percentages are based on the numbers in Table 6.17 in section 6.4. and are arrived at by adding the +/- (24%) and +/- structures (1%) on the one hand and the -/+ (73%) and -/- (2%) on the other.
Just as with the written test, however, far more correct forms were produced than we would expect solely on the basis of the distribution of the various alternatives in their first language. After all, in the Dutch written test, 61% of the if-clauses contained the would-equivalent zouden and in only 39% of the cases was a preterite or pluperfect used. In the Dutch interviews, too, far more hypothetical if-clauses (65%) contained zouden ‘would’ than was the case in learner English. This means that the learners’ overall performance in both the written test and in spontaneous speech deviates from their first language in the direction of the target language norm.

The results described above are arrived at by adding the numbers of correct and incorrect if-clauses produced during the interviews. It could be the case, however, that one individual consistently produces correct forms while another learner’s performance increases the average error rate by marking all if-clauses with would. So in order to find out if there were any level differences with respect to the performance of the individual learners, a second analysis was carried out. For each level the number of subjects who produced minimally 1+ (if would) structure is listed in Table 6.26 below.\(^\text{16}\)

**Table 6.26**

Number of learners who did not produce any +/- structures versus those learners who produced one or more, differentiated by LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>level 1</th>
<th>level 2</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 errors</td>
<td>7 (29.2%)</td>
<td>12 (44.4%)</td>
<td>19 (36.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more errors</td>
<td>17 (70.8%)</td>
<td>15 (55.6%)</td>
<td>32 (64.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>24 (100)</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
<td>51 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Table 6.26 shows that there were fewer learners in level 1 who did not produce any errors, the chi square is not significant \( (\chi^2 \text{ (pearson)} = 1.269 \text{ df } 1, p = .260) \). So the highly advanced learners do not outperform the less advanced learners in this respect either.

In order to further explore to what extent the error rate varied across the subjects of each group, the percentage of correct forms (i.e. -/+ ) was calculated for each individual and the subjects were arranged in order of their scores.

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\(^{16}\) The total number of subjects for level 1 was 25 but there was one subject who did not produce any hypothetical if-clauses at all.
We can see that more highly advanced (level 2) subjects scored 100%, but, as we have seen in Table 6.26 this difference was not significant. Moreover, as the lines go down in a very similar fashion, we can conclude that the level effects found in the written test are indeed absent from the data obtained during the interviews. The lowest percentage of correct forms for level 1 was 16.7% (2 correct forms against 10 *if woulds*). For level 2, the lowest percentage was 0%; one subject used *would* + infinitive in all 6 hypothetical *if*-clauses produced during the interview.

Since some subjects hardly produced any hypothetical *if*-clauses at all while others produced many, the totals on which these percentages are based vary. One subject’s score of 100% was based on her 23 correct hypothetical *if*-clauses while another subject produced only 2 *if*-clauses, which were both correct. Cases like these, however, were quite extreme.

6.5.5. Time frame (non-past)

In the previous chapter it was shown that the factors time (future, present), constrained the selection of the past tense in the Dutch (L1) and English tests (L2). In the interviews, half of the non-past hypotheticals had future time reference while the other half had present time reference. These time frames were established by means of a context preceding each target sentence. In this way, the factor TIME could be manipulated on the basis of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 4. This meant that the future *if*-clauses contained 2-state propositions (e.g. *< they get a puppy for Christmas?>*, if they got a puppy for Christmas) and it was clear that the topic time

---

17 Again, the subject who did not produce any hypothetical *if*-clauses at all is not included in the analysis.
followed the time of utterance (TT after TU) while in the if-clauses with present time reference, the target contained a 1-state proposition (<I know him>, if I knew him) and the topic time included the time of utterance (TT incl TU).

In sections 4.3.2. and 5.4. we have seen that it is possible to hypothesize about a future 1-state content. It was shown that a conditional like: If John had money, he would go to Mexico is ambiguous (depending on the context) between a reading where he does not have any money, and will not go and a reading where it is possible that he may some day have the money to go.

The (non-past) questions of the interview were formulated in a way that allowed both answers containing present counterfactual if-clauses and future hypothetical if-clauses. Most (non-past) questions, however, were interpreted as having future topic times. This was particularly clear in cases where the interviewees described a possible 2-state proposition (e.g. 9, 10 and 11 below). It was also clear from the many cases where the present tense was used, often alongside hypothetical forms, which, as we have seen in the previous chapters is not possible when a present counterfactual meaning is conveyed (see section 6.5.7. below).

(9) Q In what situations would you give a false name to the police?  
A (...) If I would be stopped because the lights on my bike don’t work, I think I still would say my own name (...)  

(10) Q Under which circumstances would you go into the streets to march or join a demonstration?  
A (...) If our minister would decide, for instance, to stop all scholarships

(11) Q In what situations would you send food back in a restaurant?  
A If I found something yucky in it (...)  

TU ----[---++]+++  

The majority of the relevant answers, however, had a 1-state proposition in the if-clause. This meant that some conditionals were counterfactual (e.g. (12) and (13) below).

(12) Q In what situations would you drink and drive?  
A Never. I don’t drink at all and if I wou, if I would drink, I would never do it  

(13) A Well I can’t drive, but if I could drive, I wouldn’t drink and drive  

--------[-TU-]-------  

In (12) and (13) it is clear from the context that the speaker is talking about a topic time which includes the time of utterance: I don’t drink and I can’t drive. The if-clauses that follow are counterfactual: If I would drink and If I could drive.

Counterfactual if-clauses like these also occurred in some answers to questions about past time frames:
(14) Q  Under which circumstances would you have joined the army?
A  If I was an army freak, if I liked the army, I would have joined them
(15) Q  Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have ended up in a criminal circuit?
A  If I would live in Italy, perhaps in Sicily and erm well, if my whole complete family would be in the mob or or would be robbing banks and stuff maybe that would have influenced me (...)

In (14) and (15) it is clear that the if-clauses have present time reference and are counterfactual since they are combined with main clauses containing past hypothetical forms (see 4.3.2.).

Finally, the ambiguity of the meaning of I-state if-clauses described above was sometimes left unresolved. It was not always possible to determine the topic time of the conditionals. In the examples given below, it is not clear whether the topic time includes or follows the time of utterance.

(16) Q  In what situations would you go and live in a squat?
A  (...) If I wouldn't have a home, I well, I could probably do it, if it was necessary
(17) A  Well if I was homeless and if that was a place I could find shelter, then I would do it.

In Chapter 5 it was argued that a future hypothetical if-clause can be replaced by an open (future predictive) if-clause without a dramatic change in meaning. In this case it is not unthinkable that the speakers intended to say something like: If I am ever without a home... (TT after TU). It is, however, also possible that they are describing a situation which does not obtain now (TT incl TU), i.e. if I didn't have a home, but I do and if I was homeless, but I am not. In cases where it was insufficiently clear whether the topic time included or followed the time of utterance, the conditionals were not included in Table 6.27 below.

Table 6.27
Hypothetical if-clauses produced, differentiated by verb FORM and TIME frame (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>62 (28.4%)</td>
<td>15 (17.2%)</td>
<td>77 (25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/</td>
<td>156 (71.6%)</td>
<td>72 (82.8%)</td>
<td>228 (74.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>218 (100)</td>
<td>87 (100)</td>
<td>305 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the conditionals which were included in the analysis, more correct forms were used in if-clauses with present time reference than in those with future time reference
\(\chi^2\) (pearson) = 4.13 df 1, \(p = .042\). This is in accordance with the findings reported in the previous sections. There we saw that would was used more often in future than in present if-clauses and that this difference can be traced back to the distribution of the would-equivalent zouden in Dutch. Unfortunately, the number of Dutch hypotheticals produced during the interviews which served as a pilot study is rather small. However, there too it seemed to be the case that zouden is favoured when the topic time follows the time of utterance (in 16 out of 19 cases) while it was only used in 4 out of only 8 present counterfactuals.

6.5.6. Verb

In Chapter 5 we saw that the majority of the if-clauses in the Dutch corpus contained strong verbs. The same is true for the if-clauses produced during the interviews. Table 6.28 below shows that, in the if-clauses that did have a weak verb, significantly more +/- structures (50%) were produced than was the case with the strong verbs (21.1%). \(\chi^2\) (pearson) = 16.69 df 1, \(p = .000\). This is again in accordance with the effect of verb morphology in the written English test described in section 6.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strong</th>
<th>weak</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>55 (21.1%)</td>
<td>22 (50.0%)</td>
<td>77 (25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/</td>
<td>206 (78.9%)</td>
<td>22 (50.0%)</td>
<td>228 (74.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>261 (100)</td>
<td>44 (100)</td>
<td>305 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect which has already been mentioned in Chapter 5 and which is related to verb morphology is the fact that in the corpus (and in the interviews), the vast majority of the strong verbs are highly frequent verbs with monosyllabic stems. Be and have in particular occur far more frequently than any other verb. Together they account for nearly 53% of the finite verbs in the if-clauses produced during the interviews. As these verbs tend to trigger the preterite rather than zouden in Dutch and the preterite forms was and had closely correspond to their English equivalents, a second analysis was carried out in which forms of be and have were excluded.

Table 6.29 below shows that even if be and have are excluded, more correct forms are used when the finite verb is strong (\(\chi^2\) (pearson) = 8.69 df 1, \(p = .003\). Again this is what we would expect on the basis of the Dutch corpus and written Dutch and English tests.
Table 6.29
Hypothetical if-clauses produced, differentiated by verb form and verb frame; be and have excluded (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strong</th>
<th>weak</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/</td>
<td>25 (25.0)</td>
<td>22 (50.0)</td>
<td>47 (32.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-/</td>
<td>75 (75.0)</td>
<td>22 (50.0)</td>
<td>97 (67.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100 (100)</td>
<td>44 (100)</td>
<td>144 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5.7. The use of the present tense
In section 6.5.3. above we have seen that even though the interview was designed to elicit hypothetical constructions, the answers to the questions did not always contain hypothetical conditional sentences. In fact, most answers contained one or more non-hypothetical, open conditionals as in (18) or the subject switched back and forth between hypothetical and non-hypothetical mode as in (19) and (20).

(18) Q Under which circumstances would you send food back in a restaurant?
A If it’s cold or it should be warmer than it is and er if it’s too salty or whatever (...)

(19) A Probably if there was a hair in my food, not if it was really disgusting because I I I do that lots of times that I pick something I don’t know and then I just don’t like it. I would still finish it or at least not send it back but if there is something disgusting in there like, I don’t know, some false teeth I will send it back (...)

(20) A When it’s really awful and I had to pay a lot for it. (...) So if I have to pay a lot and it isn’t what I asked, then I would send it back.

At first sight, this may look like a case of avoidance of what is famously a difficult area of grammar. The learners could simply prefer to use the safe and easy present tense and form open conditionals. However, closer inspection of the data produced by native speakers of Dutch revealed that a similar tendency can be observed here.

(21) Q In wat voor situaties zou je het eten terugsturen in een restaurant?
‘Under which circumstances would you send food back in a restaurant?’
A Eh, als het bedorven is, of als er een vlieg op zit misschien. Dat zou ik tenminste wel vertellen (...) ‘Eh, if it is off, or if there is a fly on it, maybe. I would at least tell them’
The use of open conditionals was much more restricted in the interviews conducted with native speakers of English, as Table 6.30 shows.

**Table 6.30**

Open versus hypothetical if-clauses in Dutch, English and learner language (column percentages are given in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dutch L1</th>
<th>English L1</th>
<th>English L2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>162 (85.3%)</td>
<td>14 (16.3%)</td>
<td>622 (67.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-past hypothetical</td>
<td>28 (14.7%)</td>
<td>72 (83.7%)</td>
<td>305 (32.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>190 (100)</td>
<td>88 (100)</td>
<td>927 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a distinct preference for open conditionals in Dutch. Relatively few hypothetical constructions are used despite the fact that they had to respond to hypothetical questions. The native speakers of English behaved much more in accordance with the set-up of the interview in this respect. Interestingly, the Dutch learners of English were somewhere in between. They did use fewer hypothetical constructions than native speakers of the target language but also behaved rather differently from the Dutch native speakers.

It seems to be the case then that speakers of Dutch indeed freely switch between hypothetical and non-hypothetical mode. This same phenomenon was also observed in the Dutch corpus and the written test. Even though they use the present tense in most of the if-clauses they do tend to mark their main clauses for hypotheticality by means of *zouden* (‘would’) as in examples (21) and (22) above.

### 6.5.8. Past time frames

The last part of the interview consisted of hypothetical questions in past time frames, as in (23) and (24):

(23) What could have been a reason for you to go and study at a different university?

(24) Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have dropped out of high school?

Even though these questions were intended to elicit past hypothetical if-clauses, this did
not always work. For instance, the interviewee often switched to a non-past time frame. This was done by both non-native (25) and native (26) speakers:

(25)  Q   Under which circumstances would you have joined the army?
      A   If it would earn me lots of money (…)

(26)  Q   Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have dropped out of high school?
      A   I don’t think I’d drop out, unless it was death in the immediate family, but I wouldn’t be, I wouldn’t totally drop out, ever (…)

There were also relatively many cases where no hypothetical if-clauses appeared in the answers at all:

(27)  Q   Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have ended up in a criminal circuit?
      A   No.

(28)  A   Oh, Jesus, no not at all because, er, I mean there probably have been chances but it’s all, I I’m a bit naive I think so I’d probably go right through it and don’t notice anything criminal going on and my parents are very have always been very protective over me and er I just think I come from a real good background so I there’s never really been an opportunity for me to go astray. Not really, just with the drinking.

The results for hypothetical if-clauses with past time reference, however, are different from the results of the written, form-focussed test described in section 6.4. There we saw that in hypotheticals with past time reference, 19% ++ en 2% +/- were produced while the percentage of +/- structures produced during the interviews is higher. Would was inserted in 28 (41%) of the 68 past hypothetical if-clauses (as in 29 below), and only 40 (58.8%) were formed correctly.

(29)  Q   What could have been a reason for you to go and study at a different university?
      A   Maybe if a lot of my friends would have gone to to that university (…)

There was not a single example of the contracted form ‘d in the past hypotheticals and the erroneous use of would was equally widespread across the two levels.

Both the literature on hypothetical conditionals and the investigation of the British National Corpus described in Chapter 2, showed that the use of would in past if-clauses occurs regularly in the speech of English native speakers. However, the interviewees did not produce any if-clauses containing would. There was one case where the interviewer used would
(30)  Q  So if you would have been born a different person?

but the non-native speakers clearly overuse would compared to the native speakers of English. There is another important difference between the past hypotheticals produced by non-native and native speakers. Not only do the non-native speakers tend to overuse would in their if-clauses, they also have other problems forming past hypothetical if-clauses in spontaneous speech. For instance, sometimes they used non-past forms where it was clear that they wanted to express past hypothetical meaning.

(31)  Q  What could have been a reason for you to go and study at a different university?
A  If my parents would move before, during my high school period and would move away from this university to, close to another university, I would have gone to that other university but now I really like studying in Nijmegen.

In (31) the subject is talking about a 2-state proposition <my parents move during my high school period> which, as the context shows, has clearly not taken place.

In the examples below the subjects also had trouble producing past hypotheticals and used deviant forms, as in (32), (33) and (34) below.

(32)  Q  Under which circumstances would you have chosen a different subject?
A  (...) If I haven’t had an American boyfriend, I probably would have done something else.

(33)  A  okay if I was been born a different person that probably yeah but I am the first one in my family to go to university

(34)  A  If I was accepted in another college, I would have done something else (...)

There are two factors which may have caused the difficulties in (32). First of all, the main verb in the if-clause is to have, which makes the formation of the pluperfect (had had) rather awkward. Secondly, the if-clause contains a negator, which, increases the cognitive load involved in formulating an appropriate response.

The subject in (33) mixes up two different forms: was born and had been born. This error can be traced back to the first language. In Dutch the pluperfect of <I be born> would end up as ik was geboren (lit. I was born), which is a so-called false friend of the English (passive) preterite form I was born. It is therefore not surprising that the learner mixes up the Dutch and English pluperfect forms. Similarly, the subject in (34) fails to backshift was accepted to had been accepted.

6.5.9. Discussion
The main advantage of the collection of data by means of interviews was that this technique could provide insight into the use of hypothetical constructions in actual (foreign) language use. However, examining the (semi) spontaneous speech of learners,
meant that it was not possible to systematically control the factors that proved to affect the learners' performance during the written test (time frame, clause order and verb morphology). Due to the set up of the interviews, relatively few hypothetical *if*-clauses were accompanied by a main clause and in very few of these "complete" hypothetical sentences does the *if*-clause occur finally. This meant that the factor ORDER could not be investigated.

Despite this lack of control, some transfer effects found during the written test turned out to play a role in the production of spontaneous speech as well. Relatively more correct forms were used in *if*-clauses with present time reference than in those with future time reference. This effect can be traced back to the distribution of the preterite and the periphrastic conditional (*zouden* + inf.) in Dutch. Furthermore, as in the written test, the learners produced more hypothetical preterites when the finite verb in the *if*-clause was strong, which is again what we would expect on the basis of the workings of the factor verb morphology in Dutch. However, there were also some important differences between the off-line written data and the data produced during the interviews.

The highly advanced third, fourth and fifth-year students did not outperform the less advanced learners as was the case when the learners had to fill in the verb forms during pen and paper testing. It appeared that the group of students who seemed to have mastered the rules of hypothetical conditional formation in English were in many cases not able to use them correctly in spontaneous speech.

Not only was the level effect different, the spontaneous production of past hypothetical forms was also revealing. Far more erroneous *if would have* constructions were used than could be expected on the basis of the written test and the Dutch corpus.

Even these highly advanced learners' behaviour deviated from the target language norm when they were not focussed on form. These varying results between the two methods of data collection are in accordance with, for example, Hulstijn & Hulstijn (1984) who systematically investigated the effect of time pressure and focus of attention (i.e. grammar or information) and found that learners performed significantly more accurately when asked to pay attention to form.

The method of data collection outlined in this section allows us, or rather forces us, to adapt the order of acquisition proposed in section 6.4.3. In the spontaneous speech of our interviewees, past hypotheticals are formed incorrectly more often than non-past conditionals, and, more importantly, the high number of *if would have* constructions, as well as some of the other deviant forms, cannot be traced back to the L1.

It could be argued that the learners' use of *would* in past *if*-clauses is a reflection of the 'non-standard' use of *if 'd (ha) ve* found in the speech of adult native speakers but there are several reasons why the data from the interview can be better explained in an acquisitional framework. Firstly, unlike the native speakers of English, the advanced Dutch learners tend to use *would* in its full form. If they were simply taking on the substandard linguistic usage of native speakers, we would have found predominantly contracted forms as we did in the British National Corpus (see section 2.1.5.2.). Secondly, not only the forms but also the frequency of the double *would* construction are different from that which would be expected on the basis of the
language these learners have been exposed to both during their studies and in the media. Finally, in addition to the insertion of would, many learners also produced other types of errors. Learners for instance failed to produce correct past hypothetical forms where past hypothetical meaning was clearly intended.

In section 3.1 we have seen that past hypotheticals also proved to be the most problematic subtype in first language acquisition, due to their semantic complexity and cognitive load. Even older children had trouble correctly forming past hypotheticals during a sentence imitation task and often inserted would in the if-clauses. It seems that even advanced learners show signs of backsliding when having to produce these complex constructions in spontaneous speech without being focussed on form. They frequently fall back on more general learner strategies and show a relatively strong tendency to produce morphologically symmetrical past hypotheticals where both clauses are overtly marked for hypotheticality by means of would in its full form.

6.6. Conclusion

Statistical analyses of the Dutch corpus and Dutch test revealed that the distributional patterns of the four hypothetical structures show a striking resemblance. Not only did the main effects found for +/- and -/+ in the corpus show up again in the test, a large number of interaction effects found in the corpus were also confirmed and are summarized below.

**TIME FRAME:** In hypothetical conditionals with future time reference, both clauses tend to be marked for hypotheticality by means of the periphrastic conditional (+/+), while the -/+ structure is frequently used in present (counterfactual) if-clauses, where there is less reason to avoid the ambiguous preterite. This difference between the two non-past time frames is especially big whenever the if-clause occurs initially. When future if-clauses occur finally, this means they are preceded by a main clause marked for hypotheticality and the preterite is a “safe” option for the if-clause that follows. For the same reason, the factor ORDER is significant both in the test and the corpus: more +/- constructions are used in initial than in final if-clauses, especially with future time reference.

In both the corpus and the test, strong verbs trigger a preterite more often than do weak verbs. This VERB effect is stronger for present than for future conditionals, since speakers of Dutch tend to mark both clauses of a future hypothetical by means of zouden (+/+), which leaves less room for variation. In addition, the VERB effect is limited to initial if-clauses, which is probably caused by the fact that the preterite is used much more freely in final if-clauses regardless of verb morphology. The interaction effects involving VERB are less clear in the corpus due to the fact that, unsurprisingly, the majority of (if)-clauses there contain a strong verb, while 50% of the target verbs in the test were weak.

In past time frames, the conditional perfect is used more often in the test than in the corpus, where -/- is the most common structure. This “overuse” of the +/- and -/+ structures, which was also observed in conditionals with present time reference, is
likely to be the result of the nature of the test. Despite the fact that the use of the pluperfect is more limited, the ORDER effect we saw in the corpus, namely a shift from -/- to -/+ with final if-clauses was also observed in the test.

Finally, the hybrid patterns described in section 5.4. not only occur in the natural spoken and written language of the corpus, they also show up in the written test.

The Dutch learners of French did well on the French test and produced relatively few si -rais structures. 78% of the target structures produced were the correct -/+ structure and only 17% +/-.

Compare Schachter

The MANOVA analyses did not report any main effects for +/- and only TIME was significant for -/+. In addition a number of interaction effects were found which could not be traced back to the L1. Closer inspection of the French data revealed that these interaction effects resulted from the fluctuations of missing data across the items and the proportions +/- and -/+ did not vary with TIME, ORDER and VERB. As no evidence for the transfer hypothesis was found in the French data, we can conclude that the, albeit limited, use of the conditionnel in si-clauses is in line with the more general tendency to use maximum transparency and morphological symmetry as described by Wekker, et al. (1982), Peels (1989) and Kellerman (1989).

The Dutch learners of English produced relatively few if would constructions compared to Dutch but this figure varied considerably across the three levels. It was decided to remove level 3 from the analysis as there were clear signs of a ceiling effect in their data.

Despite the fact that there was a good deal of knowledge present in the remaining two groups there was clear evidence of transfer effects. The main effects and most of the interaction effects in the non-past time frames were very similar to those found in Dutch. Particularly after the missing data had been excluded from analysis, it became clear that the if would construction was used much more frequently in future initial if-clauses with a weak verb (52% +/-) than in present counterfactual if-clauses where the if-clause occurred finally and the target verb was strong (19% +/-) which is in accordance with the transfer hypothesis. The opposite goes for the -/+ structures, (45% -/+ for future, initial, weak and 73% -/+ for present, final, strong) since structures with a preterite were only very rarely produced by the learners. This means that Dutch learners of English have considerably more trouble producing the target language norm (i.e. -/+ in those subtypes where in Dutch the ambiguous preterite is avoided and a periphrastic conditional is preferred instead.

As expected on the basis of the transfer hypothesis, past hypothetical structures were least problematic for the learners. While it is true that a double pluperfect (-/-) is frequently used in Dutch, this structure tends not to be transferred to English. The learners do not have problems forming correct past hypothetical main clauses and use the -/+ structure instead.

Finally, the hybrid patterns found in Dutch also turned up frequently in learner English. Learners shifted from open to hypothetical forms in future conditionals and frequently marked present conditionals for counterfactuality by means of past hypothetical forms.
In addition to the written test, interviews with advanced Dutch learners of English were conducted to see how the learners deal with hypothetical structures in (semi)spontaneous speech. Although the transfer effects found described above were also found in the interviews, the results were revealing for several reasons.

Firstly, there were no level differences. Even the most highly advanced group of students (third and fourth years), who had hardly produced any if would structures during the written test, did not outperform the first-and second-year students. This means that it was only through the learners’ spontaneous speech that evidence of a degree of non-learning could be found.

Secondly, speaking about past hypothetical time frames appeared to be more problematic than was expected on the basis of the written test. More particularly, the relatively high frequency of if would have constructions could not be explained in terms of L1 influence and the learners seemed to fall back on the more general learner strategies as described by Trévise (1979); Wekker et al (1982); Kellerman (1989); Peels (1989).

Finally, during the interviews the learners, to some extent, also seemed to transfer the Dutch tendency to mix the forms used in open and hypothetical conditionals (i.e. zouden ‘would’ and the present tense). Although the Dutch and English native speaker control groups were fairly small, this tendency seems to be stronger in Dutch than it is in English. The learners’ behaviour could best be characterized as being “somewhere in between”.

To conclude, the data presented in this chapter suggest that learners of French deal with hypothetical conditionals in a way that is different from what learners of English do, which is interesting because both target languages prescribe a -/+ structure but differ with respect to their typological distance from Dutch. The cause of these differences then has to lie in differences between the two target languages. English, like Dutch marks hypotheticality by means of a free morpheme (would and zouden respectively) while French marks it as an inflection on the verb. The lack of congruence between English and French suggests that the extent to which factors like time frame, clause order and strong versus weak verb play a role is constrained by typological differences. This is in accordance with Andersen’s Transfer to Somewhere principle (TTS) (Andersen 1983), which is based on the notion that “natural acquisitional processes and the learner’s perception of structural relations within the L2 input provide a necessary catalyst for transfer to operate” (Andersen 1983: 178) and predicts that transfer is likely to occur with free invariant, functionally simple morphemes which are congruent with the L1 and L2. Andersen’s work is mainly based on studies with beginning or intermediate learners. This study shows that the behaviour of even advanced learners can only be correctly interpreted once a good description of the L1 is available, as the influence of the mother tongue is clearly present in those cases where the conditions described in the TTS principle are met.
7. Conclusion

7.0. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, we summarize the main findings. Section 7.1. deals with the theoretical questions and findings with respect to hypothetical conditionals. Section 7.2. provides a brief overview of the methods and results of the acquisition experiments reported on in this study. Finally, some suggestions for further research are given in section 7.3.

7.1. Hypothetical conditionals

One of the main goals of this study was to describe the semantics of the verb forms that can occur in Dutch hypothetical conditionals that could serve as a baseline for the investigation into the acquisition of hypothetical conditionals by Dutch learners. The following questions were taken as a starting point:

- To what extent are the various possible structures in free variation?
- Is it possible for speakers of Dutch to mark counterfactuality grammatically?

In order to be able to address these issues, it was necessary to first investigate the notions of hypotheticality and counterfactuality. In the literature, hypothetical conditionals are generally classified as either non-past or past, depending on the verb forms used in them. The term counterfactual is sometimes used to refer to past hypotheticals; others apply this term to all hypothetical conditionals. It is generally agreed that past hypotheticals receive a counterfactual interpretation as they are hypotheses about alternative pasts, which, by definition, are no longer possible. There is less agreement about non-past hypotheticals. Some claim they express the speaker’s belief that the content of the conditional is merely improbable or contains “highly unlikely, yet possible events or states” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983: 343) while others claim the speaker expresses “some kind of negative belief” (Palmer 1986: 189) or conveys the speaker’s belief that the condition is or will not be fulfilled (Leech 1971; Quirk et al. 1985, Fillmore 1992), which, according to Dancygier (1993: 411) also implies that the speaker has “knowledge to the contrary”. In his hypotheticality continuum, Comrie claims that “counterfactuality should be a stronger implicature with conditionals that have past time reference than with those that have future time reference, with those with present time reference occupying an intermediate position.” (Comrie 1986: 90). It is, however, not clear what it means for an if-clause to take up an intermediate position, nor is it clear when exactly a conditional has future or present time reference. Others (Kellerman 1989; Peels 1989) suggested a distinction between conditionals with explicit future time reference (e.g. if he came tomorrow) versus present or indefinite reference (e.g. if he came now/ever). However, the category present/indefinite as a whole is vague and, as we shall see below, the term indefinite is misleading.
Klein’s (1994) theoretical framework of time and tense was used to address the problem of the interpretation of non-past hypotheticals in particular. This new approach has made it possible to determine the interplay between time frame, the lexical semantics of the propositional content of the if-clause and the improbability or counterfactuality of the world set up by the conditional. For example, an if-clause like *If the bomb in the embassy (ever) exploded..., which, according to some belongs to the category present/indefinite, in fact has future time reference, just like If the bomb in the embassy exploded tonight...., i.e. irrespective of the presence of temporal adverbials. In both cases, the bomb in question has not exploded yet and may or may not explode in the future; there is nothing in between. Both conditionals are used to discuss a possible, unlikely, or highly unlikely explosion and in both cases the if-clause contains lexical material whose inherent temporal characteristics include a transition from one state to another (bomb not exploded -> bomb exploded). Following Klein (1994), lexical content like this is called 2-state. Since it is obvious that the bomb has not exploded yet, they must both be future hypotheticals and the speaker does not have “knowledge to the contrary”. This type of reasoning about a possible future can also be conducted replacing the hypothetical by an open (future predictive) conditional (if the bomb explodes...), without a dramatic change in meaning, which may be why, in the Dutch corpus at least, speakers often switch back and forth between the present tense and hypothetical (backshifted) verb forms.

This switching back and forth is usually not possible with if-clauses whose lexical content does not involve a change of states but describe a single state instead e.g. *If I knew the answer... or *If he lived in Amsterdam... Conditionals like these generally have present time reference and receive a counterfactual interpretation since the speakers are reasoning about an alternative present I do not know the answer and he does not live in Amsterdam and “[o]ne cannot know for certain what will or will not happen in the future, but one can know whether or not something is the case in the present or past or in general” (James 1982: 377 ) With this type of conditional, it is possible to combine a present counterfactual if-clause with a past hypothetical main clause (e.g. if you loved me, you would have bought me flowers), which is not possible with a future hypothetical if-clause containing a 2-state proposition (e.g. *If the bomb exploded, thousands would have died).

Although if-clauses with 1-state content generally get a counterfactual interpretation, it is, of course, also possible for speakers to reason about a possible future (1-state) situation. This means that, in isolation, an if-clause like if John had money (he would go to Mexico) is ambiguous between a counterfactual reading where he does not have any money and a future hypothetical meaning where he may have money some time in the future. For this reason, speakers may want to mark a present if-clause explicitly for counterfactuality by means of past hypothetical forms (If he had had money, he would go to Mexico). Although this has been noted to happen in English (Jespersen 1924; Bennett 1988), it seems to be more common in Dutch.
CONCLUSION

The generally accepted dichotomy between past and non-past hypotheticals, based solely on the tense forms that can occur in a hypothetical conditional, is clearly not sufficient when it comes to making an adequate semantic description of conditional sentences. The analysis proposed in this work shows that the lexical semantics of the propositions in hypothetical if-clauses play a bigger role than has hitherto been assumed.

The new theoretical approach enabled us to address the question of the distribution and possible differences in meaning of the hypothetical verb forms in Dutch, which, unlike English, may allow any combination of preterite and periphrastic conditional (als de bom ontplofte/zou ontploffen, stierven duizenden mensen/zouden duizenden mensen sterven). A large corpus study showed that all four variants do occur but are not in free variation. In non-past hypotheticals, the periphrastic conditional, zouden ‘would’ + infinitive can freely be used but the use of the preterite is subject to a number of limitations. It is argued that these limitations on the use of the preterite partly stem from the ambiguity between hypothetical and real past meanings, resulting from the loss of the distinctive past subjunctive endings.

In hypotheticals with future time reference, both clauses tend to be marked by the periphrastic conditional zouden (‘would’) + inf. When a preterite does occur, it tends to be accompanied by expressions like nou eens (lit: now once -> ‘what if’, ‘how about’), een keer (‘a time’) or ten minste (‘only’) to indicate that the speaker is indeed talking about a hypothetical future event (e.g. als we nou eens wegingen... ‘how about if we left’) and not about a real situation in the past.

In present counterfactuals like if he knew..., if I had money... etc., there is often less reason to avoid ambiguity and both the preterite and the periphrastic conditional can be freely used in the if-clause, although here too zouden ‘would’ is used in most main clauses.

The corpus study also showed that the difference between present and future if-clauses is to a large extent neutralized when the main clause (marked for hypotheticality by means of zouden ‘would’) occurs initially e.g. het zou treurig zijn als we volgende week in Pakistan laatste werden). In those cases, the use of the preterite in the final if-clause is far less problematic. This means that, although future hypothetical conditionals which occur initially tend to be marked by zouden, Nieuwint’s (1992) claim that the preterite signals counterfactuality is no longer supported.

The factor verb morphology was found to influence the distribution of the preterite. The preterite is used more often when the finite verb in the if-clause is strong (had, knew etc.) than when it is weak (lived, happened). This difference is particularly noticeable in present counterfactuals since the tendency to use zouden in future hypotheticals is very strong to begin with.

Structures with a preterite in the main clause are rare in Dutch and when they do occur, it is almost exclusively when the if-clause occurs initially. Not only do acceptability judgments about these structures vary, it is also far from clear which factors, besides clause order, influence people’s acceptance of them.
In conditionals with past hypothetical forms, any combination of a pluperfect and perfect conditional can occur. The corpus study showed that there is a preference for a construction with a double pluperfect (e.g. als je dat had gedaan, was ik weggegaan) but none of the four possible combinations is problematic since a double pluperfect construction like the one above is not likely to be interpreted as an open (non-predictive conditional) with past time reference although past hypothetical main clauses in initial position tend to be marked by a periphrastic conditional, rather than a pluperfect (e.g. ik zou zijn weggegaan, als je dat had gedaan).

It may seem logical and self-evident to claim that any adequate account of second language behaviour in which the first language is implicated requires a reliable description of the facts of this L1 but the findings reported above go to show that prudence is called for when it comes to using existing linguistic descriptions. In the case of Dutch hypothetical constructions, additional theoretical and corpus-based research was needed to gain insight into the distribution of the various alternatives available to native speakers. The fact that an adequate account of the L1 (and L2) facts involved are a prerequisite for SLA research then means that this field can contribute to the development of data driven and more accurate linguistic descriptions of individual languages (cf Perdue 1984). It is only by attempting to account for the variation in performance by Dutch learners of English and French, and the testing of specific acquisitional hypotheses that we are able to establish the systematic nature of verb form choice in Dutch hypothetical structures.

7.2. The acquisition of hypothetical conditionals

7.2.1. The written test
A written experiment was designed on the basis of the findings from the corpus study. Subjects at three levels of proficiency were asked to fill in the verb forms in hypothetical conditionals, first in Dutch and then in the target languages (English and French). The experiment consisted of 20 situation descriptions or pieces of conversation all ending in a hypothetical conditional whose verb forms were filled in by our subjects. The factors TIME FRAME, CLAUSE ORDER and VERB MORPHOLOGY were crossed.

The results of the Dutch version of the test showed a striking resemblance to the distributional patterns found in the corpus. This means that despite the fact that the corpus consists of spontaneous written and spoken language and the test data are the result of a written, metalinguistic activity, the workings of time frame, clause order and verb morphology found in the corpus were confirmed.

The results of the corpus study and the Dutch test made it possible to formulate the following hypotheses:
- transparency and symmetry hypothesis: Dutch learners of English and French will use the (periphrastic) conditional in both clauses in the target language, irrespective of their preferences in Dutch.

- transfer hypothesis: The distribution of the incorrect and correct structures will mirror the use of *zouden* and the preterite in Dutch *if*-clauses, i.e. more errors will be produced when the time frame is future than when it is present and this difference between the two time frames will be particularly noticeable when the *if*-clause occurs initially. This means that more errors will be produced initially. Moreover, more errors will be produced with weak than with strong verbs, particularly in present counterfactuals.

The students of French produced relatively few *si* + -rais constructions (16.6% overall) and no transfer effects were found. The conclusion must be that the albeit limited use of the *conditionnel* in *if*-clauses was the result of more general strategies such as transparency and morphological symmetry in the same way this has been observed for other learners of English and French, whose mother tongue cannot be the source of the error (Trévisse 1979; Peels 1989; Kellerman 1989).

However, the most important finding of this test was that, although the overall proportion of */+* structures (73.4%) was high, clear transfer effects were found when the English and Dutch versions were compared. These transfer effects were limited to the first two levels of proficiency. Level 3, consisting of highly advanced university students, did not have any problems filling in the correct verb forms in this written, form-focussed test. The other two groups produced fewer errors with present than with future time reference, especially in initial *if*-clauses and fewer errors were produced with strong than with weak verbs, as was predicted on the basis of the transfer hypothesis. Fewest errors were produced in the items with past time reference. In addition, the Dutch tendencies to use the pluperfect and perfect conditional in present counterfactuals and present tense in future conditionals were also transferred to English despite the fact the subjects had been instructed not to use the present tense.

As expected, the errors were largely confined to the *if*-clauses. Erroneous verb forms (i.e. the preterite and pluperfect) in the main clauses were rare, which confirms the findings of Wekker et al.’s (1982) study.

7.2.2. Spontaneous speech
Following the written test, it was decided to conduct interviews with (highly) advanced learners of English to see how these learners would deal with hypothetical constructions in (semi) spontaneous speech. The set up of the interviews was such that neither the interviewers (native speakers of English) nor the learners were informed about the actual aim but were told the interviews dealt with cultural differences with respect to politeness and received standards of behaviour. By being asked hypothetical questions like “Under what circumstances would you steal food from a supermarket?” the interviewees were given the opportunity to produce hypothetical conditionals.
Although the factors time frame, clause order and verb morphology could not be controlled systematically, the distributional patterns found in the data from the interviews could partly be traced back to the first language. More correct forms were used in if-clauses with present time reference than in those with future time reference and fewer errors were produced with strong than with weak verbs. As the interviews consisted of hypothetical questions, the answers tended to contain if-clauses only, which meant that the clause order factor could not be investigated.

The most important finding, however, was that the proficiency level differences observed during the written test were not found in the data collected during the interviews. More particularly, even the most highly advanced group produced as many if woulds as the groups they had outperformed on the off-line written task. This means it was not until (semi) spontaneous speech was elicited that it became apparent that the group of students who seemed to have mastered English hypothetical conditionals were not always able to use them correctly when they were not fociussed on form. During the written test, the third-year students outperformed the first-years, and, what is more, their performance was native-like. Clearly the attention paid to the grammar of English hypotheticals does have result. However, it was shown that highly advanced learners, who seemed to have mastered hypothetical conditionals during a form-focussed test, were unable to use them correctly in spontaneous speech and regressed to an earlier stage of development, particularly where it came to spontaneously producing past hypotheticals. This performance variability suggests that supplying the rule and doing written exercises is not sufficient.

Not only was the number of errors produced by the learners different but the distribution of the errors across the conditional types was also revealing. Contrary to what one would expect on the basis of the English (and Dutch) written tests, past hypotheticals proved to pose the most problems during the interviews. This manifested itself in the relatively high frequency of if would have structures, as well as other deviant forms. As these results could not be interpreted in terms of L1 influence, it was argued that the burden of spontaneously producing past hypothetical constructions causes learners to fall back on more general learner strategies also observed in FLA (Reilly 1982; Trévise 1979) and learners of English with various language backgrounds (Trévise 1979; Kellerman 1989). This tendency towards morphological symmetry can also be observed in non-standard varieties of English (and French). However, there are several reasons why the data from the interviews are better explained in terms of an acquisitional framework. Firstly, would was used in if-clauses in its full form only, while the data from the British National Corpus showed that would (and have) were nearly always contracted by adult native speakers. Secondly, the frequency of the double would construction is higher than that which the learners are likely to have encountered during their studies and in the media. Finally, the learners’ problems with past hypotheticals were not limited by a tendency to create morphological symmetry. They also made other mistakes and sometimes even failed to produce past hypothetical forms where past hypothetical meaning was clearly intended.
Another aspect which deserved some attention is the use of the present tense. Although the interviewees were confronted with hypothetical questions, they showed a strong tendency to use the present tense or even switch back and forth between hypothetical and non-hypothetical modes, found to a much lesser extent in the data collected from native speakers of (American) English. The fact that this was not a case of avoidance became clear when the use of the present tense in the Dutch interviews conducted as a pilot study was investigated. There, the present tense was even more commonly used. These hybrid structures, which we had also come across in the Dutch corpus and the written test, can be accounted for by means of the new theoretical framework outlined in 7.1. above and described in more detail in Chapter 4 of this study.

7.2.3. Differential transfer effects
The findings of this study suggests that Dutch learners of English deal with hypothetical conditionals in a way that is different from Dutch learners of French. As both target languages prescribe a past tense (preterite and imparfait) in the if-clause, it is argued that this difference must be explained in terms of the typological distance from Dutch. The English free morpheme would closely corresponds to Dutch zouden, while in French the conditionnel has a bound morpheme, an inflection on the verb which is marked for person and number.

The lack of congruence between French and Dutch suggests that the extent to which factors like time frame, clause order and strong versus weak verb play a role is constrained by typological differences between source and target languages in accordance with Andersen’s (1983) Transfer To Somewhere principle (TTS). It was found that transfer indeed plays an important role in the Dutch learners’ failure to achieve native-like competence in the area of hypothetical structures, provided that the condition of morphological congruence is met. The similarity between English would and Dutch zouden, given the transparency principle, leads to negative transfer in if-clauses. This is not surprising if we take into account that the use of this hypothetical marker in other clauses is very similar, both morphologically and semantically. This makes the learners’ tendency to use would in certain subtypes of conditionals difficult to overcome. The findings of this study suggest that the if would structures are mainly limited to those subtypes where a periphrastic conditional is strongly preferred in Dutch. Since the learners are led by their first language, positive transfer plays a role too, namely in those cases where in Dutch the preterite tends to be used.

Interestingly, the relevance of the inherent temporal characteristics of the lexical content in the if-clause does not seem to be unique to Dutch. Wald (1993) found that the English-Spanish bilingual language community in East Los Angeles frequently used would in both clauses of a conditional, particularly with what he calls non-stative verbs like come/go etc. whereas they used either would or the preterite in stative contexts like be/know etc. Evidence like this provides further support for the account of Dutch hypotheticals as proposed in this study. Moreover, the fact that the distributional patterns in the Dutch learners’ native language are in accordance with
tendencies found elsewhere means that there are even more factors which interact and conspire against our learners in a complex manner. Therefore it is even less surprising that even though highly advanced learners can be taught to form hypothetical structures as prescribed by the target language norm, they tend to fall back on the use of the periphrastic conditional in accordance with the tendencies found in their L1 during more demanding tasks.

Even though Dutch learners of French show signs of fossilized competences in the same area of grammar (third-year students did not outperform first-year students in non-past hypotheticals), L1 transfer cannot account for the data from the written test. Apparently, the fact that the use of the conditionnel and imparfait in French resembles the use of Dutch zouden and the preterite in hypothetical constructions other than conditional subclauses does not help (positive transfer) or hinder (negative transfer) these learners in a direct way. This can best be explained in terms of insufficient morphological congruence, which forms a morphological barrier to transfer.

The clear picture of the linguistic options and semantic choices for Dutch speakers provided in this study has enabled us to see how this L1 knowledge is used in a highly intelligent way depending on the language they are learning. This has been a case where an initial pre-occupation with language learning resulted and had to result in an acquisitionally relevant description of part of the grammar of Dutch.

7.3. Suggestions for further research

Although we have seen that the corpus study and the written and spoken tests have provided us with new insights into the distribution of backshifted verb forms in Dutch, the large amount of data inevitably raised several of issues which have remained unexplored. The fact that we have been able to show the workings of TIME FRAME, ORDER and strong versus weak VERB, does not mean that there may not be other factors that play a role in Dutch. Mention has been made of the possible influence of additions like nou eens, een keer, but there are undoubtedly other factors at work e.g., clause length, verb frequency, regional differences, medium (oral versus written language), negation etc.

While this study focussed mainly on if-clauses, as these have proved to be problematic for learners, main clauses constituted a problem area for the description of Dutch. As expected, the vast majority of main clauses in the corpus were marked by a periphrastic conditional and few main clauses containing a preterite were found. It is unclear why the use of the preterite seems to be more acceptable in some cases than in others. Although acceptability judgments showed that native speakers did not always agree, they, together with Nieuwint's (1992) work and the corpus study, have given us some insight into a number of factors which need further exploration in order to describe Dutch hypotheticals more accurately.

One particular area that deserves more attention is the relation between the ambiguity of the preterite and its acceptability in hypothetical constructions. Tests
have shown that this is by no means the whole story and factors like clause order, verb morphology, type of link between the clauses, variations in degree of control by the speaker all possibly play a role. This means that future study of the hypothetical preterite would require separate and careful manipulation of these factors.

Another area which was beyond the scope of this work is the study of language change. It would be interesting to see whether the limited use of the preterite in main clauses is actually disappearing, as it has in English and French. Historical sources as well as a study in “apparent time”, where judgments are elicited from various age groups, may throw more light on past and current developments.

Those same approaches could be used to find out more about the distribution of would and -rais in English and French if-clauses. Indeed, any future research into the acquisition of conditionals in those languages would require an answer to the question if, and to what extent the use of would and -rais in if-clauses is spreading and becoming more acceptable as is suggested by Wald 1993 who agrees that “this is one area of cross-dialectal use of modals which is in need of much more research”. Evidence from Wald (1993) suggests that this is indeed the case, so that factors that are at work in Dutch may play a role in English and as well.

As far as the acquisitional aspects of this thesis are concerned, it would be interesting to study hypothetical conditionals in the interlanguage of English learners of Dutch. The question whether the transparency principle would prove stronger than the structural option i.e. positive transfer of the preterite, is a particularly interesting one, seeing the use of would + inf. in certain varieties of English as described by Wald (1993). Additional research into the acquisition of Dutch hypotheticality by speakers of less closely-related languages like French, could provide more insight into the relation between transfer and general learning principles in the interlanguage of learners who do not start off with a direct structural equivalent.

Finally, it is customary in theses such as this which deal with learners of foreign languages to offer pious words about ‘implications for teaching’. Regrettably, the opportunity must be declined on this occasion, because there is many a slip between proposing an explanation for a particular form of behaviour and proclaiming a method for altering it. Of course nothing beats a good linguistic account of a linguistic phenomenon which had once appeared unsystematic, but the possession of such a description may serve merely as the catalyst for pedagogical reflections. In our case, knowing what triggers morphosyntactic choices in Dutch conditional sentences and knowing that these choices are to some extent transferred to English, is unlikely to help learners very much. We have seen that while the attention paid to hypothetical constructions by university students and teachers may seem to pay off, errors will continue to be made, but the communicative cost is after all rather small. One might even argue that the Dutch L1 and Dutch-English systems, where zouden (would) are inserted whenever it is felt that the ambiguous preterite should be avoided, are nothing if not an improvement over the English system where the preterite is the only option. This, together with the fact that native speakers of
English also sometimes fail to meet the requirements set by grammarians, leads me to conclude that the insertion of *would* is an aspect of Dutchman’s English I suspect we will just have to continue to live with, even if we now understand its origins a little better.
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Appendices

Appendix A: The sentences used in the paired comparison acceptability judgment test

The sixteen -/- and +/- sentences are listed below, each accompanied by Nieuwint’s judgements about them.

/--

1) Als je mijn broer niet was, gaf ik je aan
   ‘If you were not my brother, I turned you in’
   Nieuwint 1992
   acceptable

2) Als ik zo’n rotvent was, hielpen ze me niet
   ‘If I was such a bastard, they did not help me’
   acceptable

3) Als jij in de gevangenis zat, bezocht ik je elke dag
   ‘If you were in prison, I visited you every day’
   acceptable

4) Als ik rijk was, smeet ik eerst mijn vrouw de deur uit
   ‘If I was rich, I immediately threw my wife out’
   acceptable

5) Als dat kon, ging ik met het vliegtuig
   ‘If that was possible, I went by plane’
   acceptable

6) Als hij dat hoorde, werd hij woedend
   ‘If he heard that, he became furious’
   extremely odd

7) Als we naar Engeland gingen, waren we duurder uit
   ‘If we went to England, it cost us more’
   impossible/unacceptable

8) Als ik honger had, lustte ik wel een appeltje
   ‘If I was hungry, I wanted an apple’
   acceptable

/+/

1) Als je weer zou gaan optreden, ging ik erheen
   ‘If you would go and perform again, I went there’
   acceptable

2) Als er een atoombomb zou vallen, waren we allemaal de sigaar
   ‘If an atom bomb would fall, we were all lost’
   acceptable

3) Als hij van Bartok zou houden, vond ik dat vreselijk
   ‘If he would like Bartok, I hated that’
   odd or unacceptable

4) Als dat zo zou zijn, verbaasde me dat
   ‘If that would be the case, it surprised me’
   odd or unacceptable

5) Als hij zou horen wat er gebeurd is, verloor hij z’n verstand
   ‘If he would hear what has happened, he lost his mind’
   odd or unacceptable

6) Als hij in de gevangenis zou zitten, bezocht ik hem elke dag
   ‘If he would be in prison, I visited him every day’
   odd or unacceptable

7) Als deze theorie niet zou kloppen, verkondigde ik hem niet
   ‘If this theory would not make sense, I did not proclaim it’
   odd or unacceptable

8) Als ik teveel zou eten, woog ik geen vijftig kilo
   ‘If I would eat too much, I didn’t weigh fifty kilos’
   slightly uncomfortable
   feeling
Appendix B: Results of the paired comparison acceptability judgement tests
(-/- and +/-)

Table 1. Response pattern for paired comparisons of the -/- sentences (N=20).

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Table 2. Response pattern for paired comparison of the -/- sentences: z-scores.

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Figure 1. Scale of acceptability of the -/- sentences, based on the z-scores in Table 2.
Table 3.
Response pattern for paired comparisons of the +/- sentences (N=20)

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Table 4.
Response pattern for paired comparison of the +/- sentences: z-scores

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Figure 2.
Scale of acceptability of the +/- sentences, based on the z-scores in Table 2.
Appendix C: The written test (English version)

The English test.

1 John and Andrew’s parents are discussing what to get their children for Christmas this year. They know that John and Andrew would love to get a little puppy.

Dad: Maybe we should get them a little puppy. We want to make them happy, don’t we?
Mum: A puppy is a big responsibility. I don’t want to end up looking after it.
Dad: But if they __________ a puppy for Christmas, they __________ after it themselves.

2 George: It is rumoured that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has committed bribery and that he has stolen millions of pounds.
Judith: He may lose his job!
George: Yes, it had better not become official because if this __________ official,
the minister __________ his job.

3 The President of the United States has a button with which he can give a direct order to launch missiles and war may break out. Hopefully he will never push it. If he __________ that button, World War Three __________.

4 Mary and Cathy want to steal some chocolates from mother’s box. They are afraid that their mother might notice that some of the chocolates are missing and become very angry.
If mother __________ it, she __________ very angry with them.

5 Linda is giving a party next Friday and she is discussing it with her sister Sandra:
Sandra: Have you invited Robin and Debbie?
Linda: No, we have been on bad terms for some time now.
Sandra: I’ve heard they were planning to come; they can be so rude sometimes.
Linda: Yes, and they __________ very rude, if they __________ to my party on Friday.

6 Two friends are making arrangements for a dinner party.
James: Will you be coming by car on Saturday?
David: Yes.
James: Will you be going via Tilburg or via Breda?
David: I don’t know yet, why?
James: Well, Annie lives in Tilburg and you be able to give her a lift, if you via Tilburg.

Two neighbours are discussing a burglary that took place in their neighbourhood.

Tom: The burglar knocked on the door and when it was opened, he walked inside holding a knife. It was too late to call the police.

Susan: Well, I not open the door, if somebody in the middle of the night.

Last year, a number of hurricanes swept over Central America. There was a lot of damage. Something like that might happen here too and there a lot of damage, if something like that here.

Anne is in the fifth grade. She is doing her geography homework. One of the questions is: ‘What is the capital of Iceland?’ Anne does not know the answer and asks her parents for advice:

Anne: Mum, dad, do you know what’s the capital of Iceland? Mum and dad: No, we cannot help you. If we the answer, we you.

Two parents and their children, who are twelve and fourteen years old, want to buy tickets for the zoo. The parents want to get the children’s tickets at a discount but the ticket clerk says: ‘Sorry, the children are too old. If they under ten years old, they a discount’.

Mark: Do you know Kees de Vries? I think he works with your company.
Claire: No, I do not know him and I don’t think he works with us. This is a very small company so if he here, I him.

There are some very good football players who play for Ajax Amsterdam and who earn relatively little money. If those same footballers for an Italian team, they more money.

Two couples talk about a friend who has won a lot of money in the lottery.

Kevin: A friend of mine, recently won 10.000 pounds. He has all the money in his bank account and he doesn’t know what to do with it. What would you do?
Sue: We like expensive cars so we ___________ a car, if we ___________ ten thousand pounds in our bank account.

14 We have been living over a pub for years. We hardly ever lie awake at night because we are used to the noise. Of course we do sleep with earplugs in because they are always playing this very loud music and we ___________ awake every night, if we ___________ without earplugs.

15 Pat bought a dog the other day. I love dogs too. It’s a pity I live on the tenth floor. That is why I have never bought a dog but I ___________ a dog, if I ___________ on the ground floor.

16 Various organizations are making a collection to help out Third World countries. It is important that a lot of money becomes available. The government does not want to spend any extra money and does not support the campaign. It’s a shame because more money ___________ available, if the government ___________ the campaign.

17 Yesterday Karen was almost bitten by a dog. She wanted to climb over the fence to play in the neighbours’ garden. Luckily, her mother saw her in time and took her inside.
The dog ___________ her, if she ___________ over the fence.

18 The police found a bomb last night. It had been hidden in a car. It was strong enough to kill hundreds of people. Luckily, the police have defused it so it did not explode.
If the bomb ___________, it ___________ hundreds of people.

19 John discovered a fire in a house yesterday. He immediately called the fire brigade, which was very clever of him. Part of the house did not burn down.
The house ___________ completely, if John ___________ the fire brigade a little later.

20 Jack nearly missed the train this morning. He wanted to walk to the station but in the end he decided to take a taxi instead so that he was still in time but if he ___________ to the station, he ___________ his train.
Appendix D. The effect of **TIME**, **ORDER** and **VERB** in the written test: French and English (levels 1 and 2), target structures only.

Table 1.
The distribution of the four structures in the French test. **TIME** by **ORDER**. Column percentages are given in brackets.

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<td>initial</td>
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Table 2.
The distribution of the four structures in the French test. **TIME** by **VERB**. Column percentages are given in brackets.

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<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
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Table 3.
The distribution of the four structures in the English test. **TIME** by **ORDER** levels 1 and 2 only. Column percentages are given in brackets.

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Table 4.
The distribution of the four structures in the English test. *TIME* by *VERB* levels 1 and 2 only. Column percentages are given in brackets.

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Appendix E: The interview on “cross-cultural differences with respect to politeness and received standards of behaviour.”

This interview deals cross-cultural differences with respect to politeness and various aspects of attitudes to received standards of behaviour. It will be in English and recorded onto tape and of course it will be anonymous. We will not record your name and the tapes will be erased in the end.

* subject number...

First I need some general information:

* What subject are you studying?
* What year are you in?
* How old are you?

I: The first part of this questionnaire has to do with politeness: addressing people

* In what situations would you address somebody with ‘sir’ or ‘madam’? (Dutch: ‘meneer’ or ‘mevrouw’)
* Under which circumstances would you address somebody with their first name right away?
* In what situations would you end a letter with ‘yours faithfully’? (Dutch: ‘hoogachtend’)
* In what situations would you use the expression ‘nice to meet you’?

II: The second part has to do with standards of behaviour:

* In what situations would you send food back in a restaurant?
* In what situations would you drink and drive?
* Under which circumstances would you go into the streets to march/join a demonstration?
* Under which circumstances would you call somebody names because of the way they look?
* Under which circumstances would you steal something from a supermarket?
* In what situations would you go and live in a squat?
* In what situations would you give a false name to the police?
* In what situations would you cut the line in a shop?
* Under which circumstances would you dodge the fare on the train, bus, subway?
* Can you think of any circumstances under which you would complain to the police about your neighbours?
* Can you think of any circumstances under which you could become famous?

III: The following has to do with what you consider to be safe topics of conversation:

Would you discuss the following subjects with a fellow student of the opposite sex? Please keep in mind that he or she does not count as a ‘good’ or ‘best’ friend and it is not someone you socialize with off campus.
Would you discuss...
* Your likes and dislikes in music?
* Your views on ultra-right political movements?
* Your income?
* Whether or not you owe money, if so, how much?
* The facts of your present sex life?
* Your own views on the way you look?

IV: In which of the following situations would you interfere?

Suppose you...
* witness a fight between two unarmed men in a pub
* see two 14-year-old boys wrecking a public telephone?
* come across a woman who is kicking/abusing her dog in the park?

V: The last few items have to do with growing up:

* Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have dropped out of high school?
* Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have ended up in a criminal circuit?
* Under which circumstances would you have chosen a different subject/branch of studies?
* What could have been a reason for you to go and study at a different university?
* Under which circumstances would you have joined the army?
* Can you think of any circumstances under which you would have joined a religious sect?
Samenvatting

Docenten worden vaak geconfronteerd met het probleem dat de tussentaal van veel leerders fouten blijft bevatten die moeilijk of helemaal niet te verhelpen zijn. Deze pedagogisch resiste kent vormen noemen we gefossiliseerd. Een duidelijk voorbeeld van fossilisatie is het accent waarmee veel mensen een vreemde taal spreken, maar ook op andere gebieden van de grammatica vinden we blijvende afwijkingen die soms een hele populatie sprekers karakteriseren. Fossilisatie is van theoretisch belang omdat het een fenomeen binnen de tweede-taalverwerving is dat het tweedetaalverwervingsproces ontegenzeggelijk onderscheidt van het eerste-taalverwervingsproces. Immers, ieder zich normaal ontwikkelend kind leert zijn of haar moedertaal vloeiend spreken.

In deze studie staat de verwerving van hypothetische constructies door gevoerde Nederlandse leerders van het Engels en het Frans centraal. Hoewel deze leerders over het algemeen een hoog taalvaardighedsniveau (kunnen) halen, slagen ze er vaak niet in om dezelfde competentie als moedertaalsprekers te bereiken waar het de grammaticale markering van hypothetische conditionele zinnen betreft. Dit is opmerkelijk, zeker gezien het feit dat er wel degelijk tijd en (pedagogische) moeite aan worden besteed.

Het volgende voorbeeld illustreert een door Nederlandse leerders van het Engels veelgemaakte fout:

* If I would know the answer, I would tell you
  (i.p.v. if I knew the answer, I would tell you)

Vaak wordt would + infinitief gebruikt in de conditionele bijzin waar het standaard Engels het imperfectum (ovt) voorschrijft. Deze afwijking van de norm is niet alleen karakteristiek voor het Engels zoals dat door Nederlanders wordt gesproken. Ook in het Frans leveren conditionele bijzinnen vaak problemen op en wordt de conditionnel in plaats van de voorgeschreven imparfait gebruikt:

* Si je saurais la réponse, je te le dirais
  (i.p.v. si je savais la réponse, je te le dirais)

Wat dit fenomeen vooral interessant maakt, is het feit dat in het Nederlands in principe zowel de equivalent van de correcte als de incorrecte vormen kan worden gebruikt. Men kan in het Nederlands namelijk zowel in de conditionele bijzin als in de hoofdzin kiezen tussen het imperfectum en zouden + infinitief:

Als ik het antwoord wist/zou weten, zou ik het zeggen/zei ik het

Hetzelfde type fout komt voor in hypothetische constructies in het verleden, waar het Engels en Frans een plusquamperfectum (vvt) in de bijzin voorschrijven:
**SAMENVATTING**

*IIf I would have known, I would have told you* 
(i.p.v. If I had known, I would have told you)  
*Si j’aurais su, je te l’aurais dit* 
(i.p.v. Si j’avais su, je te l’aurais dit)

terwijl in het Nederlands opnieuw elke combinatie van een plusquamperfectum (vvt.) en zouden hebben ge- (vvtt) mogelijk is.

Als ik het had/zou hebben geweten, had ik het je gezegd/zou ik het je hebben gezegd.

Voordat we kunnen onderzoeken in hoeverre en op welke manier de moedertaal het fossilisatieproces beïnvloedt, moeten we eerst inzicht krijgen in de feiten van de moedertaal. Nederlandse grammatica’s bieden over het algemeen weinig informatie over de distributie van de verschillende alternatieven. Bovendien is niet duidelijk in hoeverre deze alternatieven vrij variëren, welke factoren de keuze van een werkwoordsvorm (kunnen) beïnvloeden en of de verschillende vormen (subtie) betekenisverschillen uitdrukken. Het doel van deze studie is daarom tweeledig:

- het maken van een adequate beschrijving van Nederlandse hypothetische conditionele zinnen;  
- meer inzicht krijgen in de problemen die zelfs gevorderde leerders hebben met hypothetische constructies.

De eerste drie hoofdstukken van het proefschrift zijn inleidend van aard. In hoofdstuk 1 bekijk ik een aantal aspecten met betrekking tot conditionele zinnen in het algemeen en hypothetische conditionele zinnen in het bijzonder. Er komen verschillende subtypen conditionele zinnen aan bod en ik besteed aandacht aan verschillende semantische en pragmatische eigenschappen van hypothetische conditionele constructies.

In hoofdstuk 2 worden de werkwoordstijden zoals die in Engelse, Nederlandse en Franse hypothetische conditionele zinnen voorkomen zowel diachronisch als synchronisch beschreven. Alle drie de talen hebben door de eeuwen heen hun conjunctiefvormen van het imperfectum en plusquamperfectum zo goed als verloren, met als gevolg dat het indicatief van het imperfectum (ovt) en plusquamperfectum (vvt) worden gebruikt om aan te geven dat een zin hypothetisch is. Daarnaast kunnen in het Nederlands en het Engels, die typologisch niet veel van elkaar verschillen, imperfectumvormen van modale hulpwerkwoorden worden gebruikt (zouden/would + infinitief). Het Frans kent de conditionnel, die niet met een hulpwerkwoord maar door middel van inflectie wordt gevormd. Ondanks dit typologische verschil komen het Frans en Engels overeen wat betreft de distributie van het imperfectum (in de bijzin) en de conditionnel/would + infinitief (in de hoofdzin). Het Nederlands komt weliswaar typologisch overeen met het Engels maar vormt een uitzonderingsgeval waar de distributie van de verschillende
alternatieven betreft omdat het, zoals we hierboven al hebben kunnen zien, alle combinaties van het imperfectum en zouden + infinitief toelaat.

Hoofdstuk 3 bestaat uit een overzicht van de literatuur met betrekking tot de verwerving van hypothetische conditionele zinnen, zowel door kinderen als door (volwassen) tweede-/vreemde-taal leerders. Het ongrammaticale gebruik van would + inf. (of de conditionnel) in de conditionele bijzin blijkt namelijk ook voor te komen bij leerders met een andere taalachtergrond dan het Nederlands. Dit zou het gevolg kunnen zijn van het feit dat ze het ambigue imperfectum willen vermijden en beide zinsdelen markeren als hypothetisch door middel van would + infinitief (of de conditionnel). Dit maakt de zin niet alleen ontegenzeggelijk hypothetisch maar resulteert bovendien in morfologische symmetrie tussen de twee zinsdelen. Omdat zowel de distributie van de verschillende Nederlandse alternatieven als de relatie tussen vorm en betekenis in het Nederlands (en in andere talen) onvoldoende duidelijk is, kon de rol van een moedertaal als het Nederlands niet worden vastgesteld.

In hoofdstuk 4 wordt daarom een nieuwe beschrijving van hypothetische conditionele zinnen gegeven. De algemeen geaccepteerde dichotomie tussen past en non-past hypothetische conditionele zinnen is niet voldoende voor een adequate beschrijving van het Nederlands. Met name de vraag wanneer een hypothetische zin al dan niet een onmogelijkheid uitdrukt (irrealis), kan met behulp van de past-versus-non-past indeling niet worden vastgesteld.

Door middel van een analyse op basis van het werk van Klein (1994) wordt een beeld geschetst van de interactie tussen het spreekmoment, de (hypothetische) tijdspanne, en de lexicaal-semantische eigenschappen inherent aan de propositionele inhoud van de zin. De belangrijkste conclusie is dat er voor een adequate beschrijving van (Nederlandse) conditionele zinnen niet twee (non-past en past), maar drie typen moeten worden onderscheiden: zinnen die betrekking hebben op een hypothetische toekomst (b.v. als dat zou gebeuren, zou ik weggaan), zinnen die betrekking hebben op een hypothetisch (en dus onmogelijk) heden (als ik het wist, zou ik het zeggen) en zinnen die betrekking hebben op een hypothetisch (en dus onmogelijk) verleden (als je dit had gedaan, had ik je ontslagen).

In hoofdstuk 5 wordt aan de hand van het theoretische kader uit hoofdstuk 4 en een groot Nederlands corpus van hypothetische conditionele zinnen getoond dat er een aantal factoren is aan te wijzen dat de distributie van de werkwoordstijden in Nederlandse hypothetische conditionele zinnen beïnvloedt. Hoewel in principe alle vier de combinaties van een imperfectum en zouden + inf. mogelijk zijn, blijkt dat het gebruik van het imperfectum aan een aantal beperkingen onderhevig is. Dit wordt toegeschreven aan het feit dat deze werkwoordstijd ambig is. Het imperfectum wordt immers niet alleen gebruikt voor het beschrijven van echte situaties in het verleden, maar, sinds het verdwijnen van conjunctieuitgangen, ook voor hypothetische situaties in het heden en de toekomst. Het vermijden van ambigue werkwoordstijden speelt kennelijk niet alleen bij tweede-taal leerders maar ook bij moedertaalsprekers van het Nederlands een rol.
In conditionele bijzinnen die slaan op de (hypothetische) toekomst gaat de voorkeur doorgaans uit naar zouden + infinitief (Als hij morgen zou komen... i.p.v. Als hij morgen kwam...) terwijl dit in bijzinnen die een onmogelijkheid in het nu aanduiden veel minder het geval is: zowel Als ik geld had... als Als ik geld zou hebben... komen veelvuldig voor.

Onderzoek naar de factor ‘zinsvolgorde’ wijst uit dat deze voorkeur voor zouden grotendeels verdwijnt wanneer de hoofdzin vooraan staat: (Ik zou het leuk vinden als hij morgen kwam). De oorzaak hiervan zou kunnen worden gezocht in het feit dat de hoofdzin door het gebruik van zouden + infinitief al duidelijk als hypothetisch gemerkt is, en dat de weerstand tegen het gebruik van het ambigué imperfectum daardoor minder is.

Naast ‘tijdspanne’ en ‘zinsvolgorde’ speelt ook de aard van het werkwoord een rol bij de keuze tussen zouden + inf. en het imperfectum. Deze laatste wordt vaker gebruikt bij sterke werkwoorden (kwam, kreeg, had) terwijl zouden + inf. vaker wordt gebruikt bij zwakke werkwoorden (zou gebeuren, zou maken etc.)

De corpusstudie wees bovendien uit dat voor het beschrijven van een hypothetisch verleden, de voorkeur in het Nederlands uitgaat naar de constructie met een plusquaamperfectum in beide zinsdelen, maar dat alle vier de alternatieven voorkomen en dat er geen sprake is van ambigué of problematische gevallen

In hoofdstuk 6 worden twee experimenten beschreven. Allereerst is er een geschreven test afgenomen, die op basis van de resultaten van het corpusonderzoek was ontwikkeld. De test bestond uit 20 situatiebeschrijvingen die allemaal eindigden met een hypothetische conditionele zin waarin de proefpersonen de werkwoordstijden moesten invullen. De factoren: ‘tijdspanne’, ‘zinsvolgorde’ en ‘aard van het werkwoord’ werden in de test verwerkt. De test werd bij gevorderde leerders van het Engels en het Frans zowel in het Nederlands als in de doelstaal afgenomen.

De resultaten van de Nederlandse versie komen nauw overeen met de resultaten van het corpusonderzoek. Dit betekent dat, ondanks het feit dat het corpus uit spontane gesproken en geschreven taal bestond en de test een geschreven metalinguistische activiteit was, de werking van ‘tijdspanne’, ‘zinsvolgorde’ en ‘aard van het werkwoord’ werden bevestigd.

Wat de doeltalen betreft, valt op dat bij de studenten Frans, die overigens relatief weinig si + conditionnel produceerden, geen effecten van de moedertaal werden gevonden. De conclusie die daaraan verbonden kan worden is dat de leerders zich niet door hun moedertaal maar door meer algemene leerstrategieën zoals het vermijden van ambigué vormen en morfologische symmetrie van de zinsdelen laten leiden.

De resultaten van de Engelse test daarentegen lieten wel degelijk transfereffecten zien: meer if + would-constructies bij zinnen over de hypothetische toekomst dan bij zinnen over het hypothetische heden, vooral daar waar de bijzin vooraan stond en meer if + would-constructies bij zwakke dan bij sterke werkwoorden. Deze transfereffecten werden echter niet gevonden bij de meest gevorderde groep (de derdejaars studenten Engels) omdat er bij deze groep sprake
was van een zogenaamd ‘plafondeffect’; zij maakten niet of nauwelijks fouten in de geschreven, op vorm gerichte test.

Vanwege dit ‘plafondeffect’ werd besloten om gesproken interviews af te nemen met ver gevorderde leerders van het Engels om te kijken hoe deze leerders omgaan met hypothetische constructies in (semi) spontane spraak. De interviews waren zodanig opgezet dat noch de interviewers (moedertaalsprekers van het Engels), noch de studenten op de hoogte waren van het daadwerkelijke doel van de gesprekken.

Hoewel de factoren, ‘tijdspanne’, ‘zinsvolgorde’ en ‘aard van het werkwoord’ niet systematisch konden worden gevarieerd, konden ook bij de interviews de distributiepatronen van would + inf. en het imperfectum terug worden gevoerd op de distributie van zouden + inf en het imperfectum in het Nederlands. Naast het feit dat er ook hier sprake was van transfer van het Nederlands naar het Engels, was er toch ook een belangrijk verschil tussen de geschreven test en de uitspraak. De meest gevorderde groep (derde- en vierdejaars Engels) deed het niet beter dan de minder gevorderde groep (eerste- en tweedejaars). Dit betekent dat pas door onderzoek van (semi-)spontane spraak duidelijk werd dat de groep die tijdens de geschreven test de hypothetische conditionale zinnen leek te beheersen, niet altijd in staat was om ze ook mondeling correct te gebruiken wanneer ze niet op correctheid en grammaticale vormen waren gericht.

Niet alleen het aantal if + would constructies bij de gevorderde leerders was verrassend, ook de distributie van de fouten over de verschillende subtypen week af van de geschreven test. Met name de hypothetische constructies in het verleden bleken problematischer dan op basis van de geschreven test kon worden verwacht. Omdat deze resultaten niet aan invloed van de moedertaal konden worden toegeschreven, moet dit te maken hebben met het feit dat het spontaan produceren van deze semantisch en syntactisch moeilijke zinnen leerders doet terugvallen op meer algemene leerstrategieën zoals die ook worden geobserveerd bij eerste taalverwerving en bij leerders van het Engels met andere taalachtergronden.

Bovengenoemde bevindingen duiden erop dat Nederlandse leerders van het Engels anders omgaan met hypothetische conditionale zinnen dan Nederlandse leerders van het Frans. Omdat beide talen een imperfectum in de bijzin voorschrijven, moet dit onderscheid worden teruggevoerd op typologische verschillen tussen de twee doeltalen. Het Engelse hulpwerkwoord would kent een equivalent in het Nederlands (zouden) terwijl de Franse conditionnel een gebonden morfeem is en als uitgang aan het werkwoord vastzit.


Bij de verwerving van het Engels daarentegen, speelt de moedertaal wel een belangrijke rol. De overeenkomst tussen would en zouden leidt tot negatieve transfer
waar het Nederlands *zouden* prefereert, terwijl in zinstypen waar in het Nederlands de voorkeur uitgaat naar het imperfectum, de leerders minder fouten maken. Tenslotte blijkt dat zelfs zeer gevorderde leerders die tijdens de geschreven test Engelse hypothetische conditionele zinnen leken te beheersen, tijdens de interviews terugvielen op hun moedertaal, en/of algemene leerstrategieën.

In hoofdstuk 7 tenslotte, wordt een samenvatting van de bevindingen gegeven en wordt geconcludeerd dat het duidelijke beeld van de linguïstische opties en semantische keuzes voor sprekers van het Nederlands dat dit onderzoek heeft opgeleverd ons in staat stelt te zien hoe deze moedertaalkennis op een handige manier door leerders wordt gebruikt of niet, afhankelijk van de taal die ze leren. In deze studie heeft de aanvankelijke interesse in taalverwerving noodgedwongen geleid tot een nieuwe beschrijving van een gedeelde van de Nederlandse grammatica.
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Curriculum vitae

Edith Schouten was born in Enschede on August 23, 1969. In 1987 she received her gymnasium B diploma from the Jacobus College in Enschede and went to the University of Nijmegen to study town and country planning (1987-1988). She soon switched to English Language and Literature and spent the academic year 1990-1991 at the University of Durham (England). She specialized in modern and applied linguistics and graduated from the University of Nijmegen in 1993. In January 1994, she was appointed by this university to carry out the research project which resulted in this thesis. She currently teaches Dutch and English at the University Language Centre in Nijmegen.