

3. Sentences Containing an Indefinable Element

Summary

We have so far been concerned with sentences (statements) whose purpose is to assign identity or existence to one or more entities. In this chapter, we are concerned with classes of sentence which do not assign identity or existence: a negative sentence, a selection, a question, a hypothesis, and a conditional. Such sentences refer only to an entity which is definite or generic and to an entity whose existence or identity, whether specific or general, has not been established. We may call an entity whose existence or identity has not been established an indefinable.

Negative sentences are of two sorts: those which deny that a connection exists between the topic and an entity which has been identified, and those which deny that sufficient information exists to establish or identify an entity in connection with the topic. These are called respectively definite and indefinite negatives.

Selection is of two sorts: in which the choice is between definite entities, and in which the choice is whether one or another entity exists. These are called respectively definite and indefinite selection, and give rise respectively to a definite and indefinite negative for the non-selected entity. In definite selection, the entities subject to selection are marked as definite or generic; in indefinite selection, they are marked as indefinite or indefinable.

A comparison is a selection which selects one quantity rather than another. A superlative is a comparison between an entity and more than one entity, with reference to the number of entities compared.

Questions are of two sorts: those which ask whether a connection exists between the topic and an entity which has been identified, and those which ask whether an entity exists which has a connection with the topic. These are called respectively definite and indefinite questions. The answer to a definite question is either a statement or a definite negative. The answer to an indefinite question is either an existential statement or an indefinite negative. The majority of question-word questions are definite. The majority of “yes”/“no” questions are indefinite.

Languages express definite negatives or definite questions by marking the verb or some other definite entity as subject to negation or to question.

Languages express indefinite negatives and indefinite questions either by constructing the verb as existential, and/or by marking the indefinable entities as indefinable.

A hypothesis is a sentence whose occurrence is uncertain. Examples are a command, wish, preference, supposition, or purpose. The verb of a sentence which expresses a fact or expected fact is indicative, while the verb of a hypothesis is subjunctive.

Preferences are of two sorts: those whose object is definite, and those whose object is indefinite or negative. These are called respectively a definite and indefinite preference. A definite preference is a fact and expressed by the indicative. An indefinite preference is a hypothesis and is expressed by the subjunctive.

Conditional statements are of three sorts: real conditions, for which the condition verb is indefinite; hypothetical and unreal conditions, for which the condition verb is indefinable. A hypothetical condition is one whose occurrence is unknown. An unreal condition is a hypothetical condition which refers to the past and therefore cannot have occurred. Hypothetical and unreal conditions employ a subjunctive or conditional form of the verb.

Other sentence types which include or may include an indefinable element are a dependency, a proposal, a supposition, a modal, a negative warranty, a negative communication, a negative perception, a preventive, and a cessative. These are discussed in later chapters.

Terms Defined or Introduced

Statement, indefinable, definite negative, indefinite negative, definite selection, indefinite selection, comparison, definite question, indefinite question, response, hypothesis, indicative, subjunctive, condition.

Indefinables

We have so far been concerned with sentences containing nouns, actions, and states which are believed to exist, and which are either definite, indefinite, or general. The purpose of these sentences is to provide precision, to introduce any new items and to identify any indefinite items. We may call such a sentence a *statement*. There is however a class of sentences which relate to entities whose existence or identity is not certain. These are certain categories of negative sentence, selection, question, hypothesis, and condition, and are the subject of this chapter.

Entities whose existence or identity is not established by a sentence are called *indefinable*. In English, indefinables may be unmarked. Alternatively, an indefinable noun may be marked with “any”, and an indefinable verb with the adverbial “at all” or “in any way”:

negative:	“He has not earned any money _(i) .” “She has not spoken _(i) about it at all.” “She is not at all upset _(i) .”
selection:	“They live in a house rather than a bungalow _(i) .” “She laughs rather than smiles _(i) .”
question:	“Do they have any money _(i) ?” “Do you speak German _(i) at all?” “Are you at all uncertain _(i) ?”
hypothesis:	“I would prefer a job which has flexible hours _(i) .” “Let them eat _(i) cake.” “She is practicing hard so that her game will improve _(i) .” “It is reported that they are Quakers _(i) .”
condition:	“If you have any ideas _(i) , please tell us.” “If you have seen _(i) him at all, you will remember him.” “If the play is at all interesting _(i) , we will put it on.”

In these sentences, the existence or identity of the words marked _(i) is not clear. In the case of the negative, the negated item does not exist, or if it exists, its identity is not known. In the case of the selection, the non-selected item is not known to exist. In the case of the question, the questioner is not clear on its existence. In the case of the condition, the occurrence of the condition is unclear.

Indefinable pronouns are “anything” and “anyone”:

negative:	“He has not seen anyone.”
selection:	“She wants a new kitchen more than anything.”
question:	“Have you thought of anything?”
condition:	“If anyone speaks to you, please telephone me at once.”

Because indefinable entities only occur in negatives, selections, questions, hypotheses, and conditions, it is possible to use the same markers for indefinables as for nonspecific entities, for example in English the word “any”. “I will accept any candidate that you propose” implies that “candidate” exists but is not identified; it is general. “I will not accept any candidate that you propose” implies that “candidate” does not exist; it is indefinable.

Quantities can also be indefinable, and again only occur in a negative sentence, question, and conditional statement. An indefinable quantity is one which is not known to exist:

negative:	“He has not started any of the lessons.”
selection:	“The fashion is for two cuff buttons rather than any other number.”

question: "Has he started any of the lessons?"
condition: "If he has not started any of the lessons, he will not come to the class."

The following sections explain the purpose of indefinable entities in each of these classes of sentence.

Negatives

A negative statement is a statement that something is not true. It fits into the general principles of sentence structure laid out in Chapters 1. and 2., and therefore contains a subject or topic which is definite or generic and which relates the statement to previous sentences. Unlike a non-negative sentence which provides new information on the subject in a predicate or comment, a negative sentence states that certain information does not apply to the subject or topic. For example, consider the following specific sentences:

"Mr Smith is not Prime Minister."
"Mr Smith is not angry at your remark."
"Mr Smith did not catch the 8.12 train to London."

These state that no connection exists between a definite subject ("Mr Smith") and some entity which is known to exist and is also definite: the "Prime Minister", "your remark", or "the 8.12 train". Similar sentences can be constructed which deny a connection between a generic subject and a definite object:

"Polar bears do not live in the Tropics."

Since the principal entities of this type of sentence are definite or generic, we can call it a *definite negative*. An extension to such a sentence is to suggest a possible alternative object, for example:

"Mr Smith is not Prime Minister, but Leader of the Opposition."
"Polar bears do not live in the Tropics, but in the Arctic."

The last sentence can be validly reformulated as:

"There are no polar bears other than those which do not live in the Tropics", or
"There are no Tropics other than those where polar bears do not live",

which show that both "polar bears" and "Tropics" are generic or definite entities.

Another purpose of a negative sentence is to state that no connection exists between its subject or topic and an indefinite entity:

"Mr Smith is not a teacher."
"Mr Smith does not go to work by train."
"Mr Smith did not eat breakfast."

"Polar bears do not eat grass."
"British politicians do not take bribes."

These sentences are similar to a definite negative, in that they deny that a connection exist between a definite or generic subject or topic (Mr Smith, polar bears, politicians) and some entities (a particular office of teacher, a particular train, breakfast, grass, bribes). However, they do not establish that these entities exist or assign an identity to them. The entities may exist and be identifiable, or they may not. Moreover, they have not been previously assigned an identity, as they would then be definite or generic. In the terms of this chapter, they are indefinable. This type of negative sentence is called an *indefinite negative*.

It follows that an indefinite or nonspecific entity cannot occur in a negative sentence. A negative sentence cannot establish that something or someone exists, and cannot identify or delimit something or someone for future reference, because it does not supply the information to do so. The most that a negative sentence can achieve is, by excluding one definite or generic option, imply that another option is more likely to be true. It can therefore only contain definite, generic, and indefinable concepts.

An extension to an indefinite negative is a non-negative indefinite object:

“Mr Smith is not a teacher, but a plumber.”
“Polar bears do not eat grass, but catch seals.”

Languages generally handle definite negation in the same way. Since the sentence states that there is no connection between the subject and the object, the verb is marked as negative, by means either of a negative adverbial (“not”) or of a negative modification of the verb. To avoid confusion with indefinite negation, the object is marked as definite by one of the means available in the language:

French: “Je ne trouve pas mon sac.” “I can’t find my bag.” [I not find not my bag.]
“Je n’ai plus du vin de cette année.” “I have no more of this year’s wine.”
[I not have more of-the wine of this year.]

German: “Wir fahren morgen nicht ans Meer.” “We’re not driving to the sea tomorrow.”
[We drive tomorrow not to-the sea.]

Welsh: “Nid wyf i yn byw yn y wlad.” “I do not live in the country.”
[Not am-I in living in the country.]

Greek: “Ἡ μουσική δεν ακουγόταν πολύ καλά.” “The music could not be heard very well.”
[The music not was-heard very well.]

Hungarian:
“Nem mentem Amerikába meglátogatni a barátomat.”
“I didn’t go to America to visit my friend.”
[Not I-went America-to to-visit friend-my.]

Turkish: “Karakol evimizden uzak değildir.” “The Police Station is not far from our house.”
[Police-station house-our-from far is-not.]

Arabic: “lam ʔaltaqi bihi min qablu” “I have not met him before.”
[Not I-met with-him before.]
“barāʕimuhu laysat munfatiḥatan baʕdu” “Its buds are not yet open.”
[Buds-its are-not open yet.]

Hindi: “āj laṛkā yahā̃ nahī̃ hai” “Today the boy isn’t here.” [Today boy here not is.]

Indonesian:
“Mereka tidak menolong kami.” “They didn’t help us.” [They not help us.]

Chinese possesses a particular adverbial “bù” to indicate definite negation and a different adverbial “méi” to indicate indefinite negation (illustrated further below):

“Tā bā diǎn yīqián zuò bù wán zuòyè.”
[He won’t be able to finish his homework by 8 o’clock.]
[He eight o’clock before do not finish homework.]

A sentence with indefinite negation has to convey that the indefinable object and other entities do not exist or are not identified, by distinguishing them from the definite entities. Languages achieve this in one of two ways:

- (i) The definite and generic entities are marked. The language possesses a means of marking an entity as indefinable. The sentence is marked as negative by marking the verb or some other entity as negative.

- (ii) The definite and generic entities are marked. The verb is marked for indefinite negation by a form of the negative existential “there is not...”. It is inferred that all non-definite and non-generic entities are indefinable.

Languages with indefinable markers include (among many others) English, French, Italian, German, Welsh, Greek, Persian, and Hindi. English has a range of optional indefinable markers which correspond to each of the markers of indefiniteness:

indefinite

“a”, “some”, “whoever”, “whatever”

“someone”, “something”, “some time”,
“somewhere”, “whenever”, “wherever”.

indefinable

“no”, “any”

“no-one”, “nothing”, “never”,
“nowhere”, “anyone”, “anything”,
“ever”, “anywhere”.

If an indefinable marker contains a negative, no other entity in the English sentence is marked as negative, including the verb. The following sentences are equivalent:

“Fine words butter no parsnips.”
“No fine words butter parsnips.”
“Fine words do not butter parsnips.”
“There are no fine words which butter parsnips.”
“There is no buttering of parsnips by fine words.”
“There are no parsnips buttered by fine words.”

French marks an indefinable entity with “de” without a definite article, or by “aucun”:

“Il n’a pas de montre.” “He has no watch.” [He not has any watch.]
“Il ne prend aucun soin.” “He takes no care.” [He not takes any care.]

French and other Romance languages, unlike English, generally mark all indefinable entities in a negative sentence as negative:

French: “Il ne lui a jamais plus écrit.” “He never wrote to her again.”
[He not to-her never more wrote.]

Italian: “Non vedo nessuno.” “I don’t see anybody.” [Not I-see no-one.]
“Piero non scrive mai lettere.” “Peter never writes letters.”
[Peter not writes never letters.]

Grammars sometimes describe this construction as “redundant negative”. The above analysis should show that it such a negative is not redundant, as it marks the affected item as indefinable.

German uses the negative indefinable marker “kein” (“no”) or a negative indefinable pronoun such as “nichts” (“nothing”) or “niemand” (“no one”). The sequence “*nicht ein” (“not a”) is not permitted:

“Ich sehe da keinen Unterschied.” “I don’t see any difference.” [I see there no difference.]
“Ich sehe da nichts Unterschiedliches.” “I don’t see anything different.”
[I see there nothing different.]
“Sie will niemand Armen heiraten.” “She doesn’t want to marry anyone poor.”
[She wants no-one poor to-marry.]

Welsh possesses negative indefinable pronouns “neb” (“no one”) and “dim” (“nothing”). It can also use “dim” to mark a noun as indefinable. A negative existential form of the verb is used:

“Nid oes dim yn y ddesg.” “There’s nothing in the desk.” [Not there-is nothing in the desk.]
“Nid oes dim car gennyf i.” “I haven’t a car.” [Not there-is no car with me.]

Greek possesses a range of non-negative indefinable markers similar to English “any”:

“Δεν ήρθε κανείς να με δει όταν ήμουνα άρρωστη.”
 “No one came to see me when I was unwell.”
 [Not came anyone that me see (subjunctive) when I-was unwell.]
 “Κανένα του βιβλίο δεν άξιζε.” “No book of his was worth anything.”
 [Any his book not was-worth.]

In Hungarian, indefinable entities are not marked with either the definite (“a”/“az”) or indefinite (“egy”) articles. There is also a negative existential “nincs” (“there is not”):

“Ezen a nyáron nem veszek új ruhát.” “I am not buying any new clothes this summer.”
 [This the summer not I-buy new clothes.]
 “Nem találkoztam senkivel az úton.” “I didn’t meet anybody on the trip.”
 [Not I-met no-one-with the trip-on.]
 “Nincs semmi a szekrényben.” “There is nothing in the cupboard.”
 [There-is-not nothing the cupboard-in.]

In Arabic, the most common marker of an indefinite negative is “lā” (“no”):

“lā ʕilma lahu bi-ʔasbābi hāḏihi l-muṣādarāti”
 “He has no knowledge of the reasons for these confiscations.”
 [No knowledge for-him at reasons these the-confiscations.]
 “wa-hāḏā l-nawʕu mina l-ḥaṣāʔiṣi lā yanmū fī l-manāʕiqi l-ḥārati”
 “And this type of grass does not grow in hot regions.”
 [And this the-type of the-grass no is-growing in the-regions the-hot.]

An Arabic indefinable entity can also be marked with “ʔayyu” (“any”):

“lam yuktaṣaf ḥattā l-ʔāna ʔayyu ʕilājīn” “No treatment has up to now been discovered.”
 [Not was-discovered up-to now any treatment.]

In Persian, an indefinable marker is “hic” (“any”). Alternatively, the indefinable entity receives the indefinite marker “-i” (“a”):

“kari nadaram” “I have no special work.” [Work-a I-have-not.]
 “hic bacce nadarad” “He has no children.” [Any children not-he-has.]

Hindi uses the indefinite articles and pronouns “koī” (“someone”) and “kuch” (“something”) as indefinables in a negative sentence:

“gā~v me~ koī tālāb nahī~ hai” “There’s no water tank in the village.”
 [Village-in any water-tank not is.]
 “tālāb me~ kuch pānī nahī~ hai” “There’s no water in the tank.” [Tank-in any water not is.]
 “ve aurte~ aksar hindī nahī~ boltī” “Those women usually don’t speak Hindi.”
 [Those women usually Hindi not speak.]

Indonesian/Malay has a range of indefinables formed from the enquiry words “apa” (“what?”), “siapa” (“who?”), and “mana” (“where?”):

“Mereka tidak memberi informasi apa pun.” “They didn’t give any information at all.”
 [They not give information any at-all.]
 “Saya tidak bertemu dengan siapa-siapa.” “I didn’t meet anyone.”
 [I not meet with anyone.]

An alternative indefinable marker is an indefinable qualifier to a noun. As we observe later in this chapter (Hypotheses), the subjunctive is a form of the verb in some languages which indicates that its occurrence is unknown. By this means, a relative clause which contains a subjunctive verb can mark a noun or pronoun as indefinable:

French: “Il y a peu de gens qui le sachent.” “There are few people who know it.”
[There are few people who it know _(subjunctive).]

German: “Wir kennen niemanden, der jetzt in der Lage wäre, diese Aufgabe zu übernehmen.”
“We know no one who is now in a position to take over this assignment.”
[We know no-one, who now in the position would-be _(subjunctive), this assignment to take-over.]

Italian: “Non ha chi lo possa aiutare.” “He has nobody who can help him.”
[Not he-has who him can _(subjunctive) help.]
“Chiunque tu sia, non puoi entrare.” “Whoever you are _(subjunctive), you cannot go in.”

Hungarian:
“Nincs kivel kártyázzak.” “I have nobody to play cards with.”
[There-is-not who-with I-play-cards _(subjunctive).]

Languages which do not generally mark nouns as indefinable, and use the negative existential for indefinite negation, include Turkish, Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, and Swahili. Some of these languages do not have indefinable pronouns.

Turkish indefinite negation uses the verb “yok” (“there-is-not”):

“Vaktimiz yoktu.” “We had no time.” [Time-our there-was-not.]

Chinese uses the adverbial “méi” to indicate indefinite negation, attached to “yǒu” (“there-is”) or another verb:

“Méi yǒu huǒchē.” “There are no trains.” [Not there-are train.]
“Wǒ méi qùguo Běijīng.” “I have never been to Beijing.” [I there-is-not going-have Beijing.]

Japanese uses the verbs “nai” (inanimate) and “inai” (animate) for indefinite negation, both meaning “there-is-not”:

“Wada-san no uchi ni wa kūrā ga nai.” “There is no air-conditioner at Mr Wada’s.”
[Wada-Mr-of house-in _(topic) air-conditioner _(subject) there-is-not.]
“Watashi ni wa kazoku ga inai.” “I have no family.” [I-to _(topic) family _(subject) there-is-not.]

For indefinite negation, Swahili uses a verb “na” which means “be with”, in the sense “have”:

“Hakuwa na bahati.” “He had no luck.” [He-was-not with luck.]
“Hakuna ajuaye.” “Nobody knows.” [There-is-not he-who-knows.]

In negative sentences, Finnish and Russian use a case for the object to indicate that the verb does not apply to it. For Finnish, it is partitive, and for Russian, it is genitive. These are the same cases that are used for nonspecific nouns and for the quantity of a noun (Chapter 2.), in this instance with the meaning “none of it”. However, the same case applies for both definite and indefinite negation. If the sentence is not to be ambiguous, another means has therefore to be used to mark the object as definite or indefinable.

In Finnish, both definite and indefinite negation is expressed by a negative verb “ei” (“not”), and its variations:

“Minä en osta taloa.” “I shall not buy a/the house.” [I not buy house _(partitive).]
“Maasaa ei ole hallitusta.” “The country has no government.”
[Country-in not is government _(partitive).]

In Russian, the adverbial “ne” (“not”) is used for definite negation and negative existential verb “net” (“there-is-not”) for indefinite negation:

“Ya ne chitayu pis'ma.” “I am not reading a/the letter.” [I not read letter _(genitive).]

“Ya ne videla nikogo iz moikh družei.” “I saw none of my friends.”
 [I not saw none (genitive) of my friends.]
 “Tam net lyudei.” “There are no people there.” [There there-are-not people (genitive).]
 “U menya net deneg.” “I have no money.” [With me not money (genitive).]

Russian also possesses an indefinable marker “nikakoi” and indefinable suffix “-libo”:

“On ne kupil nikakogo masla.” “He didn’t buy any butter.”
 [He not bought any butter (genitive).]
 “I proiskhodit eto bez kakoi-libo volokity.”
 “And this happens without any red tape at all.”
 [And goes-on this without any (indefinable) red tape.]

In Arabic, the word “min” (“of”) is used to express a quantity of something. The same word can be used in conjunction with a definite negative to indicate an indefinable entity and hence an indefinite negative:

“laysa hunāka min ʔaflāmin ʔinsāniyyatin ʔakiyyatin”
 “There are not any clever humanistic films.” [Is-not there of films humanistic clever.]
 “wa-lam ʔajid min ḥīlatin” “And I found no ruse.” [And not I-found of ruse.]

Selection and Comparison

Because every entity in a statement exists, it is being selected implicitly or expressly from a list of possible alternatives. In the sentences we have considered up to now, the selection has been implicit. In a *selection* statement, it is expressed. In English, this is by a grammatical word such as “rather than”, “instead of”, or “otherwise”, or by a negative. Selection can apply to a noun, verb, attribute, or other entity, and to an entity which is individual, specific, or general.

There are two sorts of selection, depending on whether the entity which is selected is definite/generic or indefinite/nonspecific. If the selected entity is definite or generic, the sentence is expressing a preference between that entity and another entity which is also definite or generic. This can be called *definite selection*:

“John will give the talk instead of Mary”.	(individual noun)
“He caught the early train, not the late one.”	(definite noun)
“I prefer oranges to apples.”	(generic noun)
“I type rather than write letters.”	(generic verb)

A definite selection implies a definite negative for the non-selected item:

“Mary will not give the talk.” “He did not catch the early train.” etc.

If the selected entity is indefinite or nonspecific, the sentence is stating that that entity exists while another entity does not. This can be called *indefinite selection*:

“She wrote a book, instead of an article.”	(indefinite noun)
“There was a profit last year, not a loss.”	(existential)
“Have you butter, rather than margarine?”	(indefinite question)
“If you came tomorrow rather than today, we could see you.”	(indefinite hypothesis)

A indefinite selection implies a indefinite negative of the non-selected entity:

“She did not write an article.” “There was not a loss last year.” etc.

Languages generally use a similar format to express selection, with equivalents of the grammatical words used in English:

Chinese: “Yǔqí zài jiā li dāizhe, bùrú chū qù zǒuzǒu.”

“I would rather go out for a walk than stay at home.”
 [Rather-than at home-in staying, better-to out go take-walk.]
 “Kuài zǒu ba, fǒuzé nǐ huì chídào de.” “Be quick, or you’ll be late.”
 [Quick go (imperative), otherwise you probably late-arrive.]

Japanese:

“Watashi wa ryokōsuru yori uchi ni itai desu.”
 “I’d rather stay at home than go on a trip.”
 [I (topic) travel instead-of indoors-in staying want.]
 “Basu de iku yori hoka shikata ga arimasen.”
 “There is no other way than to go by bus.”
 [Bus-by going than other way (subject) there-is-not.]

Comparison is a form of selection which chooses, not one entity rather than another, but one quantity rather than another. It therefore applies only to entities which can be measured or compared in some way, and if the quantities are known the difference can be stated:

“Joe obeys 25% more rules than Sam obeys.” (noun)
 “Sam takes one week longer to write an essay than Joe does.” (verb)
 “Sam is 5 cm taller than Joe.” (attribute)

We can call this a *definite comparison*, since it can be expressed in the form of a definite noun: “Sam’s height is 5 cm more than Joe’s.”

However, for many comparisons it is known simply that a difference exists, not what it is. This is an *indefinite comparison*:

“Joe obeys more rules than Sam obeys.” (noun)
 “Sam takes longer to write an essay than Joe does.” (verb)
 “Sam is taller than Joe.” (attribute)

An indefinite comparison requires an indefinite noun: “There is a height difference between Sam and Joe.”

A *superlative* is a comparison between an entity and more than one entity, according to a measure. The entities against which the comparison is made may be specific or general:

“Joe writes an essay in the shortest time of all the students.”
 “Of Joe, Sam, and Fred, Sam is the tallest student.”
 “The giraffe is the tallest of the living vertebrates.”

In these examples, the entities against which the comparison is made are definite or generic. We can therefore speak of a *definite superlative*. However, an alternative construction leaves the class against which the comparison is made undefined. The sentence states vaguely that the quantity compared is greater or less than anything. This is an *indefinite superlative*:

“Joe obeys most rules.”
 “Joe writes an essay in the shortest time.”
 “Sam is the tallest student.”

Languages adopt two structures to express comparison. In Finnish, as in English, a comparison marker is placed against the quantity being compared:

“Suomessa on monta suurempaa kaupunkia kuin Salo.”
 “In Finland there are many bigger towns than Salo.”
 [Finland-in are many bigger towns than Salo.]
 “Asun kaupungin vanhimmassa osassa.” “I live in the oldest part of the town.”
 [I-live town-of oldest part-in.]

German distinguishes comparative and definite and indefinite superlatives:

“Eisen ist härter als Bronze.” “Iron is harder than bronze.” (comparative)
 “Eisen ist das härteste der Metallen.” “Iron is the hardest of the metals.”
 (definite superlative)
 “Eisen ist am härtesten.” “Iron is hardest.” (indefinite superlative)

Arabic modifies the adjective to form a comparative and superlative. A definite superlative is compared with a generic noun and an indefinite superlative with a nonspecific noun:

“takūnu ʔaʔlā mina l-muntajāti l-ʔuxrā” “It will be more expensive than the other products.”
 [It-will-be more-expensive that the-products the-other.]
 (comparative)
 “ʔafḍalu l-tajhīzāti l-ṭibbiyyati” “the best of medical equipments”
 [best the-equipments the-medical]
 (definite superlative)
 “ʔaqṣā ḥurriyyatin mumkinatin” “the greatest possible freedom” [greatest freedom possible]
 (indefinite superlative)

In Italian, a definite superlative is marked with an indicative relative clause and an indefinite superlative with a subjunctive relative clause. As explained below, a subjunctive verb is one whose occurrence is not established and which is therefore indefinable:

“Venezia è la città più splendida che c’è in Italia.” (definite superlative)
 “Venice is the most splendid city there is in Italy.”
 [Venice is the city most splendid that there is _(indicative) in Italy.]
 “Venezia è la città più splendida che ci sia.” (indefinite superlative)
 “Venice is the most splendid city there is.”
 [Venice is the city most splendid that there is _{(subjunctive)-}]

Irish assumes that all superlatives are definite and constructs them as an identification between the entity compared and the quantity:

“Is é Diarmaid an fear is láirdre acu go léir.” “Diarmaid is the strongest man of them all.”
 [Is he Diarmaid the man is strongest at-them all.]

In other languages, a comparison marker, such as “than” or “besides”, is placed against the entity being compared, not the quantity. The structure is accordingly the same as for other selections:

Hindi: “āp usse baṛe hai” “You are bigger than he.” [You he-than big are.]
 “kalkattā pahle bhārat kā sabse baṛā śahr thā”
 “Calcutta used to be the biggest city in India.”
 [Calcutta-before India-of all-than big city was.]

Chinese: “Wǒ bàba bǐ wǒ māma shōu.” “My father is thinner than my mother.”
 [My father compare my mother thin.]
 “Wǒ gēge bǐ wǒ dà liǎng suì.” “My elder brother is two years older than I am.”
 [My elder-brother compare me big two years.]

Japanese:

“Ishida-san no hō ga watashi yori wakai desu.” “Mr Ishida is younger than I am.”
 [Ishida-Mr-of besides _(subject) me-than young is.]
 “Kuruma de iku hō ga basu de iku yori yasui desu.”
 “Going by car is cheaper than going by bus.”
 [Car-by going besides _(subject) bus-by going than cheap is.]

Swahili: “Macungwa haya ni mazuri kushinda yale mengine.”
 “These oranges are better than those others.”
 [Oranges-these are good to-conquer those others.]
 “Ali ni mrefu kuliko watoto wote.” “Ali is the tallest of the children.”

[Ali is tall where-there-is children all.]

Questions

In Chapter 1. (Topic and Enquiry), we saw that a question consists of a topic and an enquiry. The topic is what the question refers to, and the enquiry is the new information about it that the questioner wants to know. For the question to be meaningful, the topic has to be known to both parties and therefore definite. The reply, if it addresses the question, supplies that unknown information as a comment to the topic. We can call the comment the *response* to the enquiry. In an actual dialogue, the topic is often understood between both parties and is omitted:

“Where do you live?” “In London.”

In reality, the reply to a question does not always address it precisely. This may arise because the respondent does not accept that the topic exists, or does not heed the question accurately:

“When did you give up smoking?” “I have never smoked.”
“How many cars do you own?” “I take the bus.”

Nevertheless, the grammar of questions is based on an expectation of the correct reply, and we use the term “response” in that sense.

Questions can be specific or general. In a general question, the topic, being definite, is generic:

“What is a rhododendron?” “When do solar eclipses take place?”
“Which days is Mandy off work?”

The response can be nonspecific or generic: “a genus of flowering shrub”; “when the moon passes in front of the sun”; “Thursdays and Fridays”.

In all languages, questions are of two principal sorts:

- (i) Questions which enquire whether an action or state has occurred, is occurring, or will occur, the answer to which is “yes” or “no”. Since the action or state of a sentence is expressed by its verb, the enquiry is the verb:

“Are you going to London today?” “Yes”/“No”.
“Do you think this is a good idea?” “Yes”/“No”.
“Did Tolstoy write ‘War and Peace’?” “Yes”/“No”.

In English and many other languages, the verb of a “yes”/“no” question is placed at the start:

French: “Est-ce que vous partez?” “Are you going away?” [Query you go away?]
“Cet homme parle-t-il anglais?” “Does that man speak English?”
[That man speaks-he English?]

German: “Will er es annehmen?” “Is he going to accept it?” [Wants he it accept?]

In other languages, a “yes”/“no” question is indicated by a particle, here translated as “query”, which marks the verb as an enquiry:

Arabic: “hal tarā ?anna ḍālika ?amrun jayyidun” “Do you think that is a good thing?”
[Query you-think that that matter good?]

Turkish: “Bibanız istasyona gitti mi?” “Has your father gone to the station?”
[Father-your station-to gone-has query?]

Persian: “āya in ketāb ast?” “Is it this book?” [Query this book is?]

Hindi: “kyā lar̥kiyā~ yahā~ hai?” “Are the girls there?” [Query girls there are?]

Chinese: “Qìchē jiāle yóu ma?” “Have you filled your car with petrol?”
[Car added-have petrol query?]

Japanese:
“Yoshiko wa daigaku e iku ka.” “Is Yoshiko going to college?”
[Yoshiko_(topic) college-to go query?]

Finnish and Russian both place the verb at the start and employ a query particle:

Finnish: “Saapuiko Pekka Turkuun aamulla?” “Did Pekka arrive at Turku in the morning?”
[Arrived-query Pekka at-Turku in-morning?]

Russian: “Byl li on v teatre?” “Was he at the theatre?” [Was query he at theatre?]

A third method of marking a “yes”/“no” is by a change of intonation alone, indicated in writing by a question mark:

Hungarian:
“Le tetszik szállni az autóbusról?” “Are you getting off the bus?”
[Off like to-get the bus-from?]

Malay: “Sri sudah pulang?” “Has Sri gone home?” [Sri has gone-home?]

- (ii) Questions whose enquiry takes the form of a word such as “what”, “which”, “who”, “when”, “where”, “why”, “how”, or “whose”. These are conventionally called “wh”-questions, and select a response from a range of possible entities rather than the two of “yes” or “no”. Some “wh”-questions place the enquiry word at the start:

English: “Who was the author of ‘War and Peace’?”

French: “À quelle heure partira son ami?” “When will his friend leave?”
[At what hour will-leave his friend?]

Spanish: “De qué estás hablando?” “What are you talking about?”
[Of what are-you talking?]

Russian: “Ch’yu ruchku vy vzyali?” “Whose pen did you take?”
[Whose pen_(object) you took?]

Hungarian:
“Hova akarsz menni ma este?” “Where do you want to go tonight?”
[To-where you-want to-go today evening?]

Arabic: “maʕa man ʔunāqiʕu l-mawḏū‘a l-ʔāna”
“Who do I discuss the subject with now?” [With whom I-discuss the-subject now?]
“alāma tubaʕθiru ʔamwālaka” “What are you squandering your money on?”
[On-what you-are-squandering money-your?]

Persian: “koja mixahid beravid” “Where do you want to go?”
[Where you-want that-you-go?]

Other languages leave the “wh” word in the position in the sentence where they expect the response to be:

Hindi: “vah kiskā makān hai?” “Whose house is that?” [That whose house is?]

Malay: “Anda membaca apa?” “What are you reading?” [You read what?]

Chinese: “Nǐ jīntiān shàng shénme kè?” “What classes do you have today?”
[You today attend what class?]

Japanese:

“Kinō no pātī ni wa dare ga kimashita ka.” “Who came to yesterday’s party?”
[Yesterday-of party-to (topic) who (subject) came query?]

For both of these types of question, it is possible to distinguish between two types: a definite question and an indefinite question. In a *definite question*, the respondent is invited to select from a range of possible responses, all of which are believed to exist:

“Are you married to Joan?” “Did you fly or drive to Scotland?”

The majority of “wh” questions are definite. “Who was the author of ‘War and Peace’?” selects from a range of possible Russian authors. “When did you leave for work?” selects from a range of possible times. The negative of a definite question implies that it is sensible to state all the range of possible responses, and is therefore not often asked:

“Did you not fly to Scotland?” “No, I drove/took the train/hitched a lift, ...”
“Who was not the author of ‘War and Peace’?” “Chekhov, Turgenev, Pushkin, ...”

Since the enquiry and response of a definite question are known to exist, they are either definite or indefinite:

“Who was the author of ‘War and Peace’?” “A Russian novelist.”
“When did you leave for work?” “Some time before 8.00.”

Since a definite question assumes that the response exists, the answer may be that it does not:

“Did you fly or drive to Scotland?” “I didn’t go to Scotland.”
“When did you leave for work?” “I didn’t leave for work.”
“Are you married to Joan?” “I’m divorced from her.”

In Irish, the topic of a definite question is phrased as a restrictive qualifier to the enquiry:

“Cathain a ithis do dhinnéar?” “When do you have dinner?” [When that you-eat for dinner?]
“Conas a d’éirigh leat.” “How did you manage?” [How that it-arose with-you?]

In another form of definite question, the enquiry is an entity in focus. Because the topic is the rest of the sentence including the verb, the verb is definite and the response (if not “yes” or “no”) is focus-topic. For example, in “Is it red or white wine that you prefer?”, the topic is “that you prefer?” and the response is a particular range of options: “red or white wine”. In Finnish and Russian, the enquiry is put in focus position at the start of the question, and is marked by the query particle (“ko”/“kö” in Finnish and “li” in Russian):

Finnish: “Pekkako saapui Turkuun aamulla?”
“Was it Pekka who arrived at Turku in the morning?”
[Pekka-query arrived at-Turku in-morning?]

Russian: “Khorosho li ona igraet na pianino?” “Does she play the piano *well*?”
[Well query she plays on piano?]
“Chasto li on igraet v futbol?” “Does he play football *often*.”
[Often query he plays in football?]

In Turkish, the query particle “mi” can put any element in focus and so make it the enquiry:

“Bakan İngiltereye gitti mi?” “Has the Minister gone to England?”
[Minister England-to gone-has query?]
“Bakan İngiltereye mi gitti?” “Is it to England that the Minister has gone?”

[Minister England-to query gone-has?]
“Bakan mi Ingiltereye gitti?” “Is it the minister who has come to England?”
[Minister query England-to gone-has?]

In an *indefinite question*, the respondent is invited to say that the response does or does not exist. By extension, if the response exists, the reply might identify it. The majority of “yes/“no” questions are indefinite:

“Have you any butter?” “Yes”/“No”/“It’s in the fridge.”
“Are you going to the theatre?” “Yes”/“No”/“We’re off to see ‘The Rivals’.”

However, a “wh” question may be indefinite if its enquiry is not known to exist:

“What book are you reading?” “None”/“‘War and Peace’.” (indefinite)
“Which book are you reading?” “‘War and Peace’.” (definite)
“Where did you go yesterday?” “Nowhere.” (indefinite)
“Where did you go yesterday, London or Manchester?” “Manchester.” (definite)

Since the enquiry of an indefinite question is not known to exist, it is indefinable, and the response is either definite or indefinable. The question is therefore existential : “Is there...?”. (Chapter 1, Existence and Non-Existence). The examples are equivalent to:

“Is there butter in your fridge?” “Is there a play you are going to see?”
“Is there a book you are reading?” “Is there a location you went to yesterday?”

The negative of an indefinite question implies that the enquirer is expecting that the enquiry does not exist:

“Have you not any butter?” “Are you not going to the theatre?”
“Are you not reading a book?” “Didn’t you go anywhere yesterday?”

If only the verb is indefinable, an indefinite question is expressed by marking it as an enquiry or by constructing the question as existential:

Italian: “Cosa fai di bello?” “Are you doing anything interesting?”
[Something do-you of interest?]

German: “Führen Sie Kühlschränke?” Do you stock [any] refrigerators?

Russian: “Pri gostinitse est’ pochta?” “Is there a post-office in the hotel?”
[In hotel is-there post-office?]

Welsh: “Oes caws ’da chi?” “Have you got any cheese?” [Is-there cheese with you?]

Arabic: “hal min ?amalin fī taylībi l-xayri ?alā l-šarri”
“Is there any hope for the triumph of good over evil?”
[Query of hope in triumph the-hope over the-evil?]

Persian: “nan darid” “Have you any bread?” [Bread you-have?]

Chinese: “Nǐ yǒu wèntí ma?” “Do you have any questions?” [You have questions query?]

Indefinite questions often include both the verb and another element in the enquiry. In that case, the language may mark that element as indefinable in some way, for example “any” in English:

French: “Avez-vous du beurre?” “Have you any butter?”

Italian: “Vuoi ancora degli altri panini?” “Do you want more sandwiches?”
[You-want still any more sandwiches?]

Greek: “Δεν ήρθε κανείς να με ζητάει.” “Didn’t anyone come asking for me?”
[Not came anyone that me asked-for (subjunctive)?]

Russian: “Vy nashli kakoe-nibud’ plat’e vashego razmera?” “Did you find a dress your size?”
[You found any dress your size (genitive)?]

Welsh: “Dych chi’n nabod unrhywun allai helpu?” “Do you know anyone who could help?”
[Are you in know anyone could help?]

Irish: “An bhfuil aon airgead agat?” “Have you any money?”
[Is-there any money at-you?]

Persian: “hic kodam az anhara didid” “Did you see any of them?” [Any of them you-saw?]

Chinese: “Wǒ néng wèi nǐ zuò diǎnr shéngme shì ma?” “Can I do anything for you?”
[I can for you do unit anything query?]

Hypotheses

A statement expresses what the speaker believes to be a fact. The verb that it contains refers to an action or event which is believed to exist. However, there are other verbs which convey an action or state which is not known to be a fact, but a hypothesis or supposition, and which does not become a fact when the sentence is uttered. The conventional grammatical term for a verb expressing a hypothesis or supposition is *subjunctive*, while one expressing a fact is *indicative*. Examples of a hypothesis are a command or wish, an indefinite preference, supposition, purpose, or hypothetical condition.

Since the action or state of a subjunctive verb is not known to exist, it is indefinable, and if it is represented by a noun, that noun is indefinable.

Certain languages such as the Romance languages (Italian, Spanish, French, etc) mark all subjunctive verbs; others only mark subjunctives in certain constructions. The following are examples. Hypothetical conditions are described in the following section.

Imperatives are subjunctive because they express a desire, not a fact:

Italian: “Mi scriva presto.” “Write to me soon.” [To-me write (subjunctive) soon.]

Greek: “Ας μιλάει όσο θέλει.” “Let him speak as much as he wants.”
[Let he-speak (subjunctive) as-much he-wants.]

Swahili: “Chakula kipate moto.” “Let the food get hot.” [Food it-get (subjunctive) heat.]

Wishes and commands are subjunctive for the same reason:

Italian: “Vuole che veniate voi tutti.” “He wants you all to come.”
[He wants that come (subjunctive) you all.]
“Il capitano comanda che tu venga subito.”
“The captain orders you to come at once.”
[The captain orders that you come (subjunctive) at-once.]

Hungarian:
“Azt írták, hogy jöjjek haza.” “They wrote that I should come home.”
[That they-wrote, that I-come (subjunctive) home.]

Persian: “xaheš mikonam darxaste mara qabul konid”
“I ask you to agree to accept my request.”
[Request I-make request-of me (object) accept you-make (subjunctive).]

Swahili: “Mwambie mtoto asome.” “Tell the child to read.”
 [Him-tell _(subjunctive) child he-read _(subjunctive).]
 “Mama amekataa nisiende.” “Mother has refused to let me go.”
 [Mother has-refused I-not-go _(subjunctive).]

Preferences can be divided between those which refer to a definite or generic object and those which refer to an object which is indefinite or nonspecific. If the object is definite or generic, the preference is a fact and its verb is indicative. If the object is indefinite or nonspecific, any preference concerning it is a hypothesis; its verb is therefore subjunctive. These can be called respectively a *definite preference* and *indefinite preference*:

Italian: “Cerco la giacca che va con questa gonna.”
 “I’m looking for the jacket that goes _(indicative) with this skirt.”
 “Cerco una giacca che vada bene con questa gonna.”
 “I’m looking for a jacket which goes _(subjunctive) well with this skirt.”

Spanish: “Prefiero ese coche que tiene cuatro puertas.”
 “I prefer that car which has _(indicative) four doors.”
 “Prefiero un coche que tenga cuatro puertas.”
 “I prefer a car which has _(subjunctive) four doors.”

Perceptions and communications are subjunctive if what is perceived or communicated is not certain, and indicative if it is perceived or communicated as a fact. The subjunctive applies if the verb of perception or communication is negative or interrogative, since it has not or not yet happened:

Italian: “Credo che sia già partito.” “I think that he’s _(subjunctive) already gone.”
 “Credo che partirà alle nove.” “I think that he will go _(indicative) at nine.”

 “Dissero che il re fosse morto.” “They said that the king was _(subjunctive) dead.”
 “Dissero che il re morì ieri sera alle undici.”
 “They said that the king died _(indicative) last night at eleven.”

 “Non so se sia già partito.” “I don’t know whether he’s already left.”
 [Not I-know whether he’s _(subjunctive) already left.]
 “Non dico che non sia intelligente.” “I don’t say that he’s not clever.”
 [Not I-say that not he’s _(subjunctive) clever.]
 “Avrebbe voluto sapere dove tu fossi stato?”
 “Would he have wanted to know where you had _(subjunctive) been?”

Persian: “tasavvor mikonam ta hala raside bašad” “I think he will have arrived by now.”
 [Supposition I-make by now arrived he-is _(subjunctive).]

Gerunds of purpose are subjunctive since they represent a wish rather than a fact (Chapter 5., Gerund). Negative gerunds are subjunctive because they have not happened:

Italian: “Studia molto affinché possa vincere il premio.”
 “He’s studying a great deal so as to win the prize.”
 [He-studies much so-that he-can _(subjunctive) win the prize.]
 “Aprite la porta senza che lui se ne accorga.” “Open the door without his noticing.”
 [Open the door without that he himself of-it notices _(subjunctive).]

German: “Sie ging vorbei, ohne daß sie mich auch nur einmal angeschaut hätte.”
 “She passed by without even once looking at me.”
 [She passed by, without that she me even once looked-at had _(subjunctive).]

Hungarian:
 “Felhasználtam az alkalmat arra, hogy elszökjek.”
 “I used the opportunity to get away.”
 [I-used the opportunity onto-that, that I away-get _(subjunctive).]

Persian: “inra panhan kard ta kasi peida nakonad” “He hid this so that no-one would find it.”
[This _(object) hiding he-made so-that anyone finding not-he-makes _(subjunctive).]

Swahili: “Walisikia sauti wasimwone mtu.” “The heard a voice without seeing anyone.”
[They-heard voice they-not-him-see _(subjunctive) person.]

Concessive clauses are subjunctive if they represent a future event:

Spanish: “Vendieron la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se oponía.”
“They sold the estate, despite the fact that grandfather opposed _(indicative) it.”
“Venderán la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se oponga.”
“They’ll sell the estate, despite the fact that grandfather will oppose _(subjunctive) it.”

A dependency is subjunctive since by its nature it has not yet arisen:

French: “Je viendrai au cas que je soit libre demain.”
“I shall come in case I am _(subjunctive) free tomorrow.”

Italian: “Glielo venderò purché mi paghi bene.”
“I’ll sell it to him so long as he pays me well.”
[To-him-it I’ll-sell provided-that me he-pays _(subjunctive) well.]
“Aspettate finché io torni.” “Wait till I come back _(subjunctive).”
“Voglion partire prima che lei venga.”
“They want to leave before she comes _(subjunctive).”

Persian: “ta inra naxanid namifahmid” “You will not understand this until you read it.”
[Until this _(object) not-you-read _(subjunctive) not-you-understand.]

Conditions

A conditional sentence is one which only occurs if another event (the *condition*) occurs. The likelihood of its occurrence depends on the likelihood that the condition will be fulfilled. We can call the sentence which is dependent on the condition the *conditional*. (An alternative terminology, not used here, is to call the condition the protasis and the conditional the apodosis.)

Languages distinguish three types of conditional sentence, depending on the likelihood that the condition will be fulfilled and the conditional will occur. They are called real, hypothetical, and unreal, and they correspond to different identities for the conditional verb. We can consider the following examples:

- (i) “If you write, we shall reply.” “If you come today, we shall be here.”

“We shall reply” states the action which will occur if the condition “if you write” is fulfilled. “We shall be here” states the state which will exist if the condition “if you come today” is fulfilled. They identify the action “reply” and the state “is here”. Using the terminology of Chapter 2., they are indefinite verbs. The conditions are *real conditions*.

Alternative ways to express a real condition are:

“Provided you write, we shall reply.” “Even if you write, we shall reply.”

The first of these sentences is the same as “if you write...”, except that the condition is a sufficient one for the conditional to follow. The second sentence implies that the conditional will follow whether or not the condition is fulfilled. In both cases, the conditional verb is indefinite.

A real condition can only be specific and refer to the present or future. It cannot refer to the past or be general, because in those aspects it is known whether the condition is fulfilled, and “if” then means “when”:

“If you wrote, we replied.” “If you came, we were here.”

- (ii) “If you wrote, we would reply.” “If you came today, we would be here.”

These sentences again state an action and a state which will occur if the respective conditions are fulfilled. The difference from a real condition is that the speaker does not know whether they will occur or not. The conditions “if you wrote” and “if you came today” are therefore a *hypothetical condition*, and expressed in the subjunctive in those languages which have a subjunctive form of the verb. “Wrote” and “came” are subjunctive in English. In the terminology of this chapter, they are indefinable.

For the conditionals “we would reply” and “we would be here”, some languages possess a special form of verb called the “conditional”. Some languages use different forms of verb for the conditional and the subjunctive, and in others it is the same. Since the speaker does not know whether a conditional will occur or not, it is indefinable.

- (iii) “If you had written, we would have replied.”
“If you had come today, we would have been there.”

These sentences express an *unreal condition*. They state that the conditional events described did not take place because the condition was not fulfilled. Both the condition and the conditional are therefore indefinable.

The difference from a hypothetical condition is that the sentences refer to the past. The hypothetical conditions were not fulfilled and the conditionals therefore cannot have occurred. To express unreal conditions, languages generally use the same forms of verb as for hypothetical conditions, but in a past tense.

The “even if” construction can apply to an unreal condition but only in a negative form, because it states that the conditional did not occur in any event: “Even if you had written, we would not have replied.”

The following illustrate the application of these principles in various languages. Spanish and German possess forms for the subjunctive and conditional:

Spanish: (real)	“Si han llegado, me quedaré.” “If they’ve <small>(indicative)</small> arrived, I’ll stay <small>(indicative)</small> .”
(hypothetical)	“Si viniera, me quedaría.” “If he were to come <small>(subjunctive)</small> , I’d stay <small>(conditional)</small> .”
(unreal)	“Si hubiéramos tenido más dinero, habríamos comprado la casa.” “If we had <small>(subjunctive)</small> had more money, we’d have <small>(conditional)</small> bought the house.”
German: (real)	“Sie konnte immer ihre Tochter anrufen, wenn sie sich nicht gut fühlte.” “She could always ring up <small>(indicative)</small> her daughter if she didn’t feel <small>(indicative)</small> well.”
(hypothetical)	“Sie wäre stolz, falls sie den Preis gewinnen könnte.” “She would be <small>(subjunctive)</small> proud if she could <small>(conditional)</small> win the prize.”
(unreal)	“Wir wären weggegangen, wenn wir daß gewußt hätten.” “We would have <small>(subjunctive)</small> gone away if we had known <small>(subjunctive)</small> that.”

Welsh uses two words for “if”: “os” (real) and “pe” (hypothetical and unreal). “Pe” takes a tense which is variously describes as conditional or subjunctive. Unreal conditions are in the past conditional:

(real)	“Os bydd y trên yn hwyr, byddwn ni’n colli’r gêm.” “If the train is late, we’ll miss the game.” [If will-be the train in late, will-we in lose the game.]
(hypothetical)	“Pe baen ni’n methu, fe fydden ni’n trio eto.” “If we failed <small>(conditional)</small> , we would try again.” [If would-we in fail, would-we try again.]
(unreal)	“Pe bai gennyf ddigon o arian, fe deithiwn o amgylch y byd.” “If I had enough money, I would travel round the world.”

[If it-were with-me enough of money, I-would-travel round the world.]

Irish similarly has two words for “if”: “má” (real) and dá (hypothetical and unreal). The distinction between hypothetical and unreal is not determined by grammar:

(real)	“Má thagann sé, beidh fáilte roimhe.” “If he comes, he will be welcome.” [If comes he, will-be welcome before-him.]
(hypothetical/ unreal)	“Dá bhfeicfinn é, do labharfainn leis.” “If I saw (conditional) him, I would speak (conditional) to him.”/ “If I had seen him, I would have spoken to him.”

The Greek unreal condition is in the remote past (pluperfect):

(real)	“Δεν πρόκειται να φύγω αν δεν του μιλήσω.” “I will not leave unless I speak to him.”
(hypothetical)	[Not it-will-happen that I-leave (subjunctive) if not to-him I-speak (subjunctive).] “Αμα συναντήσει φίλο του τον καλεί αμέσως στο σπίτι.” “If ever he meets a friend, he immediately invites him to his house.” [Whenever he meets (subjunctive) friend-his, him he-invites (indicative) to-the house.]
(unreal)	“Αν είχες πάρει λαχείο μπορεί να είχες κερδίσει.” “If you had bought a lottery ticket, you might have won.” [If you-had bought lottery, it-is-possible that you had (subjunctive) won.]

Russian possesses one form for the conditional and subjunctive:

(real)	“Esli on budet svobodn, on vam pomozhet.” “If he is free, he will help you.” [If he will-be (indicative) free, he you will-help (indicative).]
(hypothetical)	“Esli by ya znala, ya by vam skazala.” “If I knew, I should tell you.”
(unreal)	[If (conditional) I knew, I (conditional) to-you told.] “Esli by vy vyekhali ran’she, vy by ne opozdali.” “If you had left earlier, you wouldn’t have been late.” [If (conditional) you left earlier, you (conditional) not were-late.]

Turkish: (real)	“Hülâsa edersek şuraya varıyoruz.” “If we summarise (aorist), we arrive (indicative) at this point” [Summary if-we-make, here-at we-arrive.]
(hypothetical)	“Sen olsan ne yaparsın?” “If it were (conditional) you, what would you do (conditional)?” [You if-you-would-be, what you-would-do?]
(unreal)	“Bilseydim buraya kadar gelmezdim.” “If I had known (subjunctive), I should not have come (indicative) here.” [If-I-had-known, here-to so-far I-did-not-come.]

Arabic also uses three words for “if”: “ʔin” or “ʔiḏā” (real) and “law” (hypothetical and unreal). Real and hypothetical conditions mainly use the imperfective; unreal conditions use the perfective. Written Arabic does not possess a conditional or a specifically subjunctive form of the verb:

(real)	“ʔin huwa taʔaxxara ʔani l-sadādi fa-sa-yūqifu l-banku l-ḥajza ʔalā ʔamwālihi” “If he delays in paying, the bank will sequester his assets.” [If he delays in the-paying then will-sequester the bank the-reserves on wealth-his.] “ʔiḏā kunta xārija dāʔirata l-sintrāli fa-ṭlub il-raqma 16” “If you are outside the exchange area, dial 16.” [If you-are outside area the-exchange then dial the-number 16.]
(hypothetical)	“law ʔalimat bi-l-ʔamri yumkinu ʔan taṭluba minhu ʔan yuṭalliqahā”

- “If she were to find out about the matter, she could ask him to divorce her.”
 [If she-finds-out about the-matter possible that she-asks of-him that he-divorce-her.]
- (unreal) “law ʔamkana waḍʔu makātiba ʔalā l-judrāni la-faʔalū ḍālīka”
 “If it were possible to put desks on the walls, they would do it.”
 [If was-possible putting desks on the-walls they-did that.]

Persian and Hindi possess a subjunctive but not a conditional:

- Persian: (real) “agar mariz bašad naxadad amad”
 “If he is _(subjunctive) ill, he will not come _(indicative).”
 [If ill he-were, he-will-not come.]
- (hypothetical) “agar mitavanestam miamadam”
 “If I could _(indicative) I would come _(indicative).”
- (unreal) “agar arzan bud xaride budam”
 “If it had been _(indicative) cheap, I would have bought _(indicative) it.”
- Hindi: (real) “agar āp cāhe~ to mai~ āpse hindī bolū~gā”
 “If you like _(subjunctive), I’ll speak _(indicative) Hindi to you.”
- (hypothetical) “agar mehnat karoge to saphal koge”
 “If you work _(indicative) you’ll succeed _(indicative).”
- (unreal) “agar mai~ bhārat gayā hotā to mai~ ne zyādā hindī zarūr sīkhī hotī”
 “Had _(indicative) I gone to India, I should certainly have learned _(indicative) more Hindi.”
 [If I India going had-been, then me-by more Hindi certainly learning had-been.]

In Indonesian, the different types of condition are indicated by different words for “if” (“kalau”, “bila”, “sekiranya”):

- (real) “Kalau wang di dalam benk sudah cukup, bolehlah kita beli.”
 “If we now have enough money in the bank, we can buy it.”
 [If money in bank now enough, can we buy.]
- (hypothetical) “Bila ada kesempatan, singgah di rumah saya.”
 “If you have a chance, drop in at my place.”
 [If have chance, drop-in at house me.]
- (unreal) “Sekiranya musyafir itu kembali ia tetap tidak akan memperoleh air minum.”
 “If that traveller returned, he still wouldn’t be given water to drink.”
 [If traveller-that return, he still not get water to-drink.]

In Chinese, the different conditions are indicated by different words for “if” (“yàoshì”, “rúgǒu”, “jiǎrú”). Real conditional verbs are also marked with “jiù” (“then”). Hypothetical and unreal conditional verbs are marked with “huì” (“can”):

- Chinese:(real) “Yàoshì xiàyǔ, wǒmen jiù bù qù.”
 “If it rains, we won’t go.” [If descend rain, we then not go.]
- (hypothetical) “Rúgǒu nǐ nǚli xuéxí, nǐ huì qǔdé hǎo chéngjī.”
 “If you study hard, you’ll get good marks.”
 [If you diligent study, you can obtain good mark.]
- (unreal) “Jiǎrú wǒ hěn yǒuqián, wǒ huì qù lǚxíng.”
 “If I were rich, I would travel.” [If I very have much, I can go travel.]

In Japanese, the condition sentence is marked with (“-ba”). The conditional sentence is not especially marked. For unreal conditions, the conditional verb is expressed in the past:

- Japanese:
 (real/
 hypothetical) “Kono kusuri o nomeba yoku narimasu.”
 “If you take this medicine, you’ll get well.”
 [This medicine _(object) if-take, well become.]

(unreal) “Motto yasukereba kaimashita.”
 “I would have bought it if it had been much cheaper.”
 [More if-cheap, bought.]

Conclusion

We have now completed our review of the different purposes of a sentence in a dialogue or narrative, generally called a *discourse*. Consideration of the function of a sentence within a dialogue or narrative can be termed *discourse analysis*, and we have seen in Chapters 1. and 3. that for this purpose, sentences can be broadly divided into seven discourse types: existential sentence, statement, definite negative, indefinite negative, definite question, indefinite question, and hypothesis.

In Chapters 2. and 3., we have tried to show that all concept words in a sentence (such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives) are either definite, indefinite, or indefinable. This is so whether the concepts words are specific or general, since general words behave as definite if they are generic and as indefinite if they are nonspecific. The categorisation of a word in a sentence as definite, indefinite, or indefinable can be called its *identity*, and our terminology can be summarised as:

	Identified	Not identified	Existence not established
Specific	Definite	Indefinite	Indefinable
General	Generic	Nonspecific	

Each discourse sentence type is made up of words of different identities. An existential sentence or statement comprises only definite and indefinite words, a definite negative or definite question includes only definite words, and an indefinite negative, indefinite question or hypothesis sentence contains only definite and indefinable words. This mixture of identities in a sentence can be called its *discourse structure*. One way of looking at a sentence is therefore through its discourse structure, and this is what we shall attempt in Chapter 13.

Realisation of the discourse structure of a language is one of the purpose of its grammar, which we shall summarise in Chapter 4. Grammatical rules are also employed in linking sentences within a discourse, for example in time or space, or by condition or causality. In Chapter 5., we shall refer to an important feature of discourse analysis not so far considered, namely the sequencing in time of sentences in a narrative, or their *aspect*. Chapter 14. brings together discourse structure, sentence linking, identity, and aspect into a single system.