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# The English Konjunktiv II

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### 0. Introducing K2

In this article, I examine the syntax of a little-studied tense-mood construction in English that appears to correspond to a past subjunctive in certain other Indo-European languages; I have dubbed this the "English Konjunktiv II" (or K2 for short) in honor of what I believe to be its closest cross-linguistic counterpart, the German Konjunktiv II (*Konjunktiv-Zwei*). Although the English K2 behaves in some respects like a past subjunctive, it does not behave syntactically or semantically like a simple combination of past tense and subjunctive mood, at least in terms of how these terms are used in English grammar. In particular, its morpho-syntax is at first blush highly irregular, and its semantics corresponds to that of a strongly counterfactual mood. The English K2 is also of interest from a socio-linguistic perspective, insofar as it belongs to an informal spoken register, and is generally avoided in formal written English.

K2 is discussed briefly by Kayne (1997), who cites examples such as the following:

- (1) a. If you hadn't **'a** said that...
- b. If you hadn't **'ve** said that
- c. If you hadn't **of** said that...

The boldface *'a*, *'ve*, and *of* in examples (1a-c) are alternative orthographical representations of a syntactic formative whose syntactic categorial status is open to debate. On one account, it is a phonological reduction of the nonfinite form of the auxiliary verb *have* in (2):

- (2) (% \*) If you hadn't **have** said that...

Kayne judges (2) to be ungrammatical; my own judgment is that (2) is perfectly acceptable, though I appear to be in the minority among English speakers on this point. An alternative account, advocated by Kayne (1997), is that the boldface formative is a particle entirely unrelated to *have*; on Kayne's account, it is a prepositional complementizer introducing a nonfinite participial CP.

I will generally use *of* (instead of *have*, *'ve*, or *a*) in constructed example sentences containing K2, but when citing naturalistic examples of K2 drawn from the web, I will leave the original orthography unchanged. I will also use *of* (rather than *have*) when referring to this particle in the text of the article, without intending to favor any particular analysis of its syntactic category. I will defer discussion of the latter issue to Section 3, where I propose an analysis of the internal syntax of K2. In the meantime, I will focus on a theoretically neutral description of the external syntactic distribution and of the construction, and its associated semantics.

### 1. The Syntactic Distribution of K2

Because the English K2 is restricted to an informal register, it has a corresponding form in the standard register, which can also be used in formal (written) contexts; that form is the past perfect. K2 differs minimally from the past perfect in its morpho-syntactic composition: whereas

the past perfect consists of the preterit form of the auxiliary *have* (*had*) followed by the past participle as in (3a), K2 in addition contains *of* (*have/’ve/a*) lodged in between them, as in (3b).

- (3) a. If John had left, ...  
b. If John had of left, ...

In both cases, *had* and the past participle may also be separated from each other by the negative particle (*not/n’t*) and/or one or more adverbs, as in (4a); in the case of K2, negation and most adverbs may precede *of*, though many orders are possible; a proper treatment of this is beyond the scope of this paper.

- (4) a. If John had suddenly left, ...  
b. If John hadn’t (suddenly) left, ...  
c. If John had of suddenly left, ...  
d. ?If John had suddenly of left  
e. If John hadn’t of left, ...  
f. ?If John had of not left, ...

Although all occurrences of K2 in the informal register correspond to the past perfect in the standard register, the converse is not the case: not all occurrences of the past perfect in the standard register can be replaced by K2 in the informal register. As far as I have been able to determine, K2 is restricted to two major types of subordinate clauses, both of which have a strongly counterfactual semantics:

- (5) a. Counterfactual conditional clauses  
b. Counterfactual complements to *wish*, *rather*, *would have preferred*, etc.

K2 is quite common in informal written English, at least as revealed by searches of written texts on the internet, especially in contexts such as web chats and discussion boards. Surprisingly, it appears to have been in use for at least a couple of hundred years; the earliest example that I have come across is attributed to George Washington, though I suspect that it is much older than this.

Here is a sampling of naturalistic examples of K2 culled from the internet, thanks to the assistance of *Google*, the linguist’s new friend. Orthography is left unchanged throughout:

- (6) *Counterfactual conditionals*
- a. If she **had’ve** frozen it, she’d’ve blackmailed the Marshall’s for it’s return  
b. You might not feel better than if you **hadn’t’ve** done the clumsy thing to begin with  
c. If they **had’ve** charged \$1 per ride, each kid would probably have spent \$5 anywa  
d. What if there **had a** been a system in place in which millions of mobile phone subscribers could have received SMS text warnings over their phones?  
e. If I **had a** been tougher maybe there would have been more drugs for me and I wouldn’t have had to take such a risky route

- f. If there **had a** been a plan, Iraq might have been moving toward self-rule by now.
- g. Listen lady," he said in a high voice, "if I **had of** been there I would of ...  
(--Flannery O'Connor)
- h. The funny thing was that the burglar alarm was on, so if there **had of** been anyone there it would have set it off.
- i. Even if they **had of** charged her, the charges would have no doubt been dismissed.
- j. If they **had of** asked me what was wrong with my mum, I could of described to them what happened when my mum was ill
- k. If you **had have** thought for a moment before clicking the installer excitedly, you might have figured this out on your own. You didn't, and had to blog about it
- l. The lack of shower came as quite a surprise, although if there **had have** been one, I'm sure that the towel policy would have been even more irritating...
- m. I honestly think if they **had have** put him in the show from the beginning, he still would have made it to the end

(7) *Counterfactual complements to wish, would rather, etc.*

- a. I wish he **had've** come tonight instead
- b. We wish we **had've** had the opportunity to move sooner
- c. As I am using it, I think to myself, I wish you **had've** installed this feature, and then a couple of minutes later I find a button that does it!
- d. I wish I **had a** bought an APPLE II Back then!!!
- e. I wish you **hadn't a** done it
- f. I wish he **had a** gone a bit more in-depth
- g. I don't know what enticed me to open that door, but I wish I **hadn't of**.
- h. I wish I **hadn't of** gotten switched to my current class, at least he was fun to look at
- i. You wish you **had of** been the one to invent adult diapers
- j. You're gonna take this and go straight to bed or wish you **had of!** ...
- k. I wish he **had of** whipped me. I would have felt better
- l. I wish I **hadn't have** had to have kept that secret from my step mum
- m. I wish I **hadn't have** had such a shitty relationship with him over the last 30 years
- n. I wish I **hadn't have** gotten drunk with a bunch of people I didn't know and almost had sex with a guy that I'd only known for a week. .
- o. There are other things, but it's all Erica fucking him on that stupid chair. I know, I wish I **hadn't have** mentioned it either. ...
- p. I would have rather he **had of** died then [sic] to end his life in an invalid state
- q. I'd rather she **had of** focused on one or the other, instead of both

- r. I would much rather they **had of** been, rather than finding out they have been "claimed" by another.
- s. This is a thread on ILE I just made, which I forgot to logout to post, and would rather I **had have** done
- t. Personally I'm not keen on the design of Rent, I'd rather there **had have** been no set  
 than the confusing set that there is.

In the standard register, the past perfect is used in a number of other, non-counterfactual contexts. In particular, the past perfect is used in contexts such as the following, to convey that an event or situation is located prior to another past time:

- (8) a. John had already left when Bill arrived.
- b. The Queen of Hearts claimed that Alice had stolen the tarts.
- c. The detective interviewed a woman who had witnessed the crime.

These are contexts where the usage of the past perfect arguably involves the phenomenon of "sequence of tense"; this raises a number of complex issues that I do not want to go into here. Regardless of this issue, the key fact to observe is that the past perfect cannot be replaced by K2 in the informal register; such examples are completely ungrammatical:

- (9) a. \*John had already of left when Bill arrived.
- b. \*The Queen of Hearts claimed that Alice had of stolen the tarts.
- c. \*The detective interviewed a woman who had of witnessed the crime.

Rather, K2 can only be used in counterfactual contexts such as those illustrated in (6) and (7); in contexts such as (8/9), the informal register must use the past perfect rather than K2.

## 2. A Sociolinguistic Interlude

It is sometimes alleged by conservative prescriptive grammarians (experts and amateurs alike) that formal written Standard English is inherently superior to non-standard registers and dialects on aspects of vocabulary or grammar where the dialects or registers differ. For example, it is sometimes pointed out that the use of *whom* in conservative Standard English preserves a distinction between accusative and nominative case that is supposedly lost in modern dialects and registers where *whom* is replaced by *who*. The restrictions on the usage of the English K2 illustrated in (4-7) provide a nice counterpoint to this type of argument, since in this case, the nonstandard informal register preserves a morphological distinction between counterfactual and non-counterfactual semantics that is absent (or lost) in Standard English.

Another type of argument that is sometimes advanced in supporting the supposed superiority of Standard English over its nonstandard competitors is the idea that Standard English conforms to systematic rules that the nonstandard dialects and registers ignore. Here too K2 provides the basis for an interesting refutation of this style of argument. In Standard English, the finite past tense form of the copula exhibits no distinction between indicative and subjunctive mood when the subject of the clause is second person or plural; *were* is used in both cases. When the subject of the clause is first or third person singular, however, the indicative past tense form

(*was*) differs from the subjunctive form (*were*). This subjunctive form *were* is used only in counterfactual contexts; more specifically, it is used in precisely those contexts where K2 occurs in the informal register:

- (10) a. If I were a terrorist, I would keep a low profile.  
b. If Beckham were on the team, we would have won the game.  
c. I wish I were a member of the royal family.  
d. I'd rather he weren't so optimistic.
- (11) a. John was/\*were already here when Bill arrived.  
b. The Queen of Hearts claimed that Alice was/\*were a thief.  
c. The detective interviewed a woman who was/\*were at the scene of the crime.

This distinction is made only for the copular verb *be*; for all other verbs, the preterit past and subjunctive forms are identical in the standard dialect. The web is full of naturalistic examples parallel to those in (10):

- (12) a. But if I **were** Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, I wouldn't be thinking conservatively.  
b. If I **were** Cheney I'd be sweating a little  
c. Oh I Wish I **Were** a Little Bar Of Soap  
d. Sometimes I wish I **were** gay  
e. I wish there **were** more Yoga studios around here  
f. He said he would rather there **were** real exposes of the casting couch rather than such "framed" encounters  
g. I would rather he **were** with her. I would rather that she rested in his arms,

The use of the subjunctive form *were* is characteristic of an elevated, educated, and traditional register; subjunctive *were* with first and third person singular subjects is widely replaced by *was* in natural and informal speech, and in much published prose. In this less formal group of registers or dialects, the distinction between indicative *was* and subjunctive *were* is apparently lost; *was* is used not only to convey past tense, as in (11), but also in counterfactual contexts parallel to those in (10) and (11), where there is no past-shifting tense interpretation, as in (13); such examples are excluded in the formal register.

- (13) a. If I was a terrorist, I would keep a low profile.  
b. If Beckham was on the team, we would have won the game.  
c. I wish I was a member of the royal family.  
d. I'd rather he wasn't so optimistic.

In Section 5, I will discuss one fact suggesting that *was* may not really be functioning as a subjunctive here, but at this point I will assume that it is.

A prescriptive guardian of traditional formal English might be tempted to claim that the formal register adheres to a conditioning rule governing the *were/was* distinction that the informal register lacks; but this claim is disproved by the fact that the same rule governs the distribution of K2 in the informal register. Rather, the appropriate way of describing the difference between the

registers is to say that each register draws a morphological distinction that is neutralized in the other register: the standard register eliminates the morphological distinction between the indicative and subjunctive forms of the past perfect, and the informal register eliminates the morphological distinction between the indicative and subjunctive forms of the copula. The registers do not differ from each other, however, in terms of the grammatical rule regulating the distribution of these forms; each register relies on the same semantic distinction between counterfactual and non-counterfactual environments to determine the distribution of those subjunctive forms for which it provides an overt morphological contrast between subjunctive and indicative. Both registers maintain a distinction between the indicative and the subjunctive, though the overt expression of this depends on morphological contrasts that are not always present.

### 3. Subjunctive and Indicative Conditionals

I have described the contrast between the past perfect and K2 in the informal register as an indicative/subjunctive contrast; this implies that K2 is the subjunctive form of the past perfect. However, it does not have the semantics of the past perfect. Rather, it has the semantics of a counterfactual past. This reflects a general property of tense morphology in counterfactual contexts.

To see why this is so, we must consider the contrast between two types of conditional clauses; I will refer to these as *indicative* and *subjunctive* conditionals, more or less following traditional usage. The examples in (14) are indicative conditionals, and those in (15) are subjunctive conditionals, referred to as "counterfactual conditionals" above:

- (14) a. If your bird is infected with this virus, it will surely die.  
b. If John leaves next week, he will not arrive in time.  
c. If John still loves you, he is a fool.  
d. If John stole the money, he made a bad mistake.
- (15) a. If your bird was/were infected with this virus, it would surely die.  
b. If John left next week, he would not arrive in time.  
c. If John still loved you, he would be a fool.  
d. If John had stolen the money, he would have made a bad mistake.

The indicative conditional often involves the occurrence of *will* in the consequent clause, especially when the consequent clause conveys a prediction, as in (14a-b), but when the consequent clause simply conveys a logical or contingent deduction, a nonmodal indicative tense can occur instead, as in (14c-d). In the subjunctive conditionals in (15), the consequent clause always contains the modal verb *would*. This usage of *would* is traditionally classified as a conditional mood form, though in other contexts it is often described as a past-tense variant of *will*. Abusch (1989) characterized the contrast between *will* and *would* as follows: *will* and *would* share a common modal stem, which she named *woll*; this stem combines with the present tense affix to form *will* and with the past tense affix *-ed* to form *would*. I will adopt this account here.

The use of *would* in the consequent clause of a conditional is usually (though not always) a reliable diagnostic of the subjunctive conditional, and its absence in the consequent clause of a conditional is always a reliable diagnostic of the indicative conditional (with the proviso that

certain other past-tense modals, such as *could*, can also be used in the consequents of subjunctive conditionals, a fact that is often overlooked). Subjunctive conditionals necessarily involve the occurrence of *-ed* in the protasis as well, as in (15), regardless of whether past tense semantics is involved (as we shall see); in indicative conditionals, *-ed* may or may not occur, though it when it does occur it always conveys past tense semantics. I will address the tense semantics shortly.

The precise characterization of the semantic contrast between the indicative and subjunctive conditionals has been the subject of much debate. It is sometimes assumed that subjunctive conditionals are counterfactual, though Iatridou (2000) has suggested that they are something closer to hypothetical; she describes them as conveying a "future less vivid". In contrast, the neutral conditional conveys a "future more vivid". Iatridou mainly considers eventive verbs, which exclude a present-tense reading in the simple present tense indicative and thus force a future-shifted reading, as in (14b); stative predicates in the simple present tense generally allow, and favor, a present-tense interpretation. The present tense with the stative predicates in (14a) and (14c) conveys a "present more vivid" and the past tense with these predicates in (15a) and (15c) conveys a "present less vivid".

Steering clear of a formal analysis of the semantics of the indicative/subjunctive distinction, the difference between the two types of conditionals can be characterized in terms of the following conditions on their presuppositions, essentially as in Karttunen and Peters (1979):

- (16) a. The indicative conditional can be used only if the speaker does not presuppose that the protasis is false.
- b. The subjunctive conditional can be used only if the speaker does not presuppose that the protasis is true.

Spelling it out more explicitly, the indicative conditional does not require that the speaker presupposes the protasis to be true; it only requires that the speaker does not presuppose it to be false. Conversely, the subjunctive conditional does not require that the speaker presupposes the protasis to be false; it only requires that the speaker does not presuppose it to be true. Thus, the two types of conditionals differ not in terms of what they presuppose, but rather in terms of what they do *not* presuppose.

This distinction accounts for Iatridou's intuitions about greater and lesser degrees of "vividness", in the following way. If the speaker is certain that the protasis is true, the subjunctive conditional is excluded, and only the indicative conditional is possible; if the speaker is certain that the protasis is false, then the indicative is excluded and only the subjunctive conditional is possible. In situations of uncertainty, the speaker's usage will generally depend on what he or she believes is most likely to be the case, though the usage may be influenced by pragmatic factors; for example, politeness may dictate using the form that corresponds to the speaker's beliefs about the addressee's presuppositions.

Let us now focus on conditional clauses where the protasis conveys a hypothetical event located in the past. Here the contrast between indicative and subjunctive conditionals is illustrated by the contrast between (14d) and (15d), repeated below, and by (17a) vs. (17b):

- (14) d. If John stole the money, he made a bad mistake.
- (15) d. If John had stolen the money, he would have made a bad mistake.

- (17) a. If your bird was infected with this virus, it will surely die.  
b. If your bird had been infected with this virus, it would probably have died.

In the indicative conditionals in (14d) and (17a), past tense semantics in the protasis is conveyed by the use of the simple past tense affix *-ed*; in the subjunctive conditionals in (15d) and (17b), past tense semantics in the protasis is conveyed by the use of the past perfect.

Iatridou (2000) suggests that, in past-tense subjunctive conditionals like those in (15d) and (17b), the past tense affix *-ed* in the protasis conveys lesser vividness, and the perfect conveys conventional past tense (past-shifting) semantics. I take this to indicate that past tense suffix *-ed* is, in general, ambiguous between preterit (past) tense, as in (14d) and (17a), and subjunctive mood, as in (15d) and (17b). Iatridou seeks to provide a unified semantics for semantic past tense and what I am calling subjunctive mood here, which she characterizes in terms of distance from the world and time of the actual speech act; I will not address this issue here.

As Ippolito (2003, 2007) has observed, there is another type of conditional clause that is more strongly counterfactual than the subjunctive conditionals considered thus far; this type of subjunctive uses the past perfect (or subjunctive perfect) to convey a temporal semantics that seems to involve no past tense semantics. This can be used in reference to a counterfactual situation located at a future time, as in (18a); but it can also be used with a simple present-tense interpretation in reference to a counterfactual situation located at the time of utterance, as in (18b).

- (18) a. If John had left tomorrow instead of today, he would still have arrived in Paris in time for the meeting.  
b. If John had been with us on this trip, we wouldn't be stranded now.

When the past perfect (or subjunctive perfect) is used in this way, the speaker must presuppose that the protasis is false; in other words, these conditionals are strongly counterfactual.

Even if the morphological past tense affix *-ed* in (18) represents subjunctive mood rather than preterit past tense, so that these past perfects are really subjunctive perfects, this still leaves the use of the perfect and its semantic effect of strong counterfactuality unaccounted for. What semantic ingredient does the perfect in (18) add to what is conveyed by the finite subjunctive (*-ed*) that results in the overall effect of strong counterfactuality?

I have suggested elsewhere, following Hoffman (1968), that the nonfinite perfect exhibits an ambiguity of temporal interpretation involving "sequence of tense" that is more usually associated with the finite morphological past tense suffix *-ed*. This arises in contexts such as the following, where the nonfinite perfect is temporally ambiguous, allowing either a past-shifted or "simultaneous" tense interpretation relative to the time of the main clause intensional predicate, as in (19a), just like the finite morphological past does in (19b):

- (19) a. Caesar believed his wife to have been in Rome at that time.  
b. Caesar believed that his wife was in Rome at that time.

If the nonfinite perfect can behave like the finite morphological past tense suffix *-ed* in exhibiting this kind of temporal ambiguity, perhaps it also exhibits the ambiguity we have seen in

conditional clauses, between preterit past and subjunctive mood. If the perfect in (18) conveys subjunctive mood, then the subjunctive perfect here can be thought of as a kind of double subjunctive. Viewed from the perspective of Iatridou's approach, these constructions can be seen as involving two degrees of remoteness from the actual world.

But Ippolito (2004) has observed that the imperfect in Italian can be used to convey strong counterfactuality in conditionals in a similar way. In Italian imperfect conditionals, the imperfect verb form occurs in both the protasis and the consequent, as illustrated in (20):

- (20) Se arrivavi prima, vedevi il film dall'inizio.  
if (you) arrive<sub>Imperfect</sub> earlier, (you) see<sub>IMP</sub> the movie from the beginning  
≈ If you had arrived earlier, you would have seen the movie from the beginning

The occurrence of the imperfect in both the protasis and the consequent clause here is reminiscent of the occurrence of the past tense suffix *-ed* in both clauses of English subjunctive conditionals (recall that *would* in the consequent clause of a subjunctive conditional is a fusion of *woll* and *-ed*.)

The Italian imperfect presumably lacks the morpho-syntactic complexity of the English past perfect (or subjunctive perfect), and it is less plausible to assume that strong counterfactuality arises from a "double subjunctive" per se. I will therefore tentatively reject the hypothesis that the perfect in (18) conveys subjunctive mood.

Ippolito proposes an account of the semantics of these imperfect conditionals that I will not discuss here in detail because of space limitations. Suffice it to say that one aspect of her idea is that the imperfect here has a kind of past-tense interpretation, but it does not locate the event conveyed by the main verb at a past time (or at any time); rather, it locates the evaluation of a modal inherent in the semantics conditional at a past time. This implies that the past-shifting tense conveyed by the imperfect takes scope over the entire conditional, even though the imperfect occurs syntactically within the conditional. On her account, an inference of counterfactuality arises from the speaker's choice to use this type of conditional-in-the-past instead of a conditional evaluated purely at the time of utterance.

I have suggested elsewhere (Stowell 1995, 2007) that the English morphological past tense affix *-ed* never directly expresses a past-shifting semantics; rather, it is a "past polarity item" licensed by a covert past-shifting formative (a silent past tense, if you like) located in a higher syntactic position in the clause. When *-ed* occurs in a main clause, it signals the presence of a silent past tense in the main clause, but when it occurs in a subordinate clause, as in (19b), the silent past tense that licenses it can in principle be located either in the subordinate clause or in the main clause. In the former case, the so-called "past-shifted" interpretation arises; in the latter case, the so-called "simultaneous" interpretation arises, since there is no covert past tense in the subordinate clause.

I have also suggested (Stowell, to appear) that the nonfinite perfect in (19a) is a past polarity item, and that this accounts for the parallel ambiguity between a "past shifted" and "simultaneous" interpretations that it exhibits. In the same way, the imperfect in languages such as Italian should be treated as a "past polarity item"; in main clauses, it conveys a past-shifting tense, but when it occurs in complement clauses analogous to that in (19b), it allows a simultaneous reading, since the imperfect can be licensed by a past tense in the main clause.

In the case of Ippolito's strongly counterfactual imperfect conditionals, the imperfect

occurs syntactically within the protasis (and the consequent) of the conditional, but the silent past tense that licenses it is located outside the conditional, taking scope over the entire conditional. Ippolito approaches the interpretation of the past perfect (subjunctive perfect) in (18) in a similar way. If the subjunctive mood conveys no more in (18) than what it conveys in (17), regulated by the usage conditions in (16), then perhaps the silent wide-scope past tense above the conditional in (18) is signaled by the use of the nonfinite perfect, as in sequence of tense contexts such as that in (19a). Viewed from this perspective, the contrast between the past perfect in the strongly counterfactual subjunctive conditionals in (18) and the past perfect in the "less vivid" subjunctive conditionals in (15d) and (17b) is analogous to the contrast between the "simultaneous" and "past shifted" interpretations of (19b). In both types of subjunctive conditional containing a past perfect in the protasis, the perfect signals the presence of a covert past tense licensing it. If the covert past tense is located within the protasis, the past tense locates the event or situation in the protasis in the past, but if the covert past tense is located outside the conditional, the conditional as a whole is strongly counterfactual, but the protasis clause is tenseless, accounting for its apparent present-tense or future interpretation.

The only remaining question is why English uses the past perfect (or rather, the subjunctive perfect) for this type of strongly counterfactual conditional, rather than the usual English counterpart to the imperfect—the simple morphological past tense affix *-ed*. The answer, I suggest, may lie in the fact that English generally lacks a subjunctive that is morphologically distinct from the indicative preterit past. The simple morphological past in the protasis of a conditional can be understood to convey either subjunctive mood or past tense, but not both, so the perfect is used instead to unambiguously convey the presence of a past-shifting tense somewhere in the structure (in this case, above the conditional). The subjunctive perfect, rather than the indicative present perfect, must be used, because the usage condition on indicative conditionals in (15'a) is inconsistent with the counterfactual inference triggered by the past tense conditional.

There is another logical possibility here, still involving the idea that these forms are subjunctive, namely to assume that the past-shifting semantic tense is encoded here by the morphological past, and that subjunctive mood is encoded here by the perfect. But this would complicate the morpho-syntactic analysis of both the morphological past and the perfect, and the hierarchical syntactic relation between them, and I see no compelling reason to adopt this complication.

Let us now return to K2. The subjunctive perfect in (18) corresponds to K2 in the informal register:

- (21) a. If John had of left tomorrow instead of today, he would still have arrived in Paris in time for the meeting.  
b. If John had of been with us on this trip, we wouldn't be stranded now.

If the morphological past tense in the protasis conveys subjunctive mood, and the perfect functions as a past polarity item signaling the presence of a past tense above the conditional, then what does the particle *of/have* convey?

I suggested at the beginning of this section that the contrast within the informal register between the past perfect and K2 involves an indicative/subjunctive alternation. This might be taken to indicate that *of/have* encodes subjunctive mood. But subjunctive mood is already encoded by the morphological finite past tense in these conditionals. If this is so, then what does

*of/have* encode? I suggest that it encodes a kind of harmonic subjunctive mood marking on the perfect itself. On this view, the informal register exhibits two forms of the perfect, one of which occurs in indicative clauses (have +-en), and the other of which occurs only in subjunctive clauses (have+ of/have + -en) . In this sense, we can think of *of/have* as a kind of subjunctive polarity item.

A possible problem with Ippolito's account of the Italian imperfect and the English subjunctive perfect is that the English subjunctive perfect (K2 in the informal register) may occur with strongly counterfactual semantics not only in conditional clauses but also in complements to *wish*-class intensional predicates. Here the subjunctive perfect and K2 can be used in reference to counterfactual events or situations that are not located in the past, as in (22a-d), similar to what happens in (18).

- (22) a. I wish John had been with us now.  
b. I wish John had left tomorrow instead of today.  
c. I wish John had of been with us now.  
d. I wish John had of left tomorrow instead of today.

On the other hand, it can also be used in reference to counterfactual events or situations that *are* located in the past, as in (23):

- (23) a. I wish John had (of) been with us last week.  
b. I wish John had (of) left last week.

Given (22), it is unclear whether the subjunctive perfect plays any role in locating the events/situations in the past in (23), or whether all of the *wish*-complements in (22-23) are tenseless from a semantic point of view.

If strong counterfactuality arises in subjunctive perfect (and K2) conditionals because the perfect signals the presence of a covert past tense scoping above the conditional, what kind of structural counterpart is available in (22), where no conditional is present for the past tense to scope over? It is plausible to suppose that a covert modal operator occurs within the subjunctive complement to the *wish*-predicate that functions similarly to the conditional modal in terms of its scopal interaction with the covert past tense that licenses the perfect in (22-23).

It should be noted in this context that there is a semantic effect associated with the subjunctive perfect conditionals in (18) and (21) that is also in play with the examples in (22). In (18a) and (21a), the use of the subjunctive perfect in reference to a counterfactual event located in the future is natural only when the counterfactual future event is being contrasted, explicitly or implicitly, with an alternative actual event that took place in the past. Thus, (21a), repeated here--

- (21) a. If John had of left tomorrow instead of yesterday, he would still have arrived in Paris in time for the meeting.

--contrasts with (24a), which is anomalous, or ungrammatical; the same contrast can be observed with *wish*-complements; thus, (22b-d) contrasts with the anomalous (24b):

- (24) a. ?If John had (of) left tomorrow instead of next week, he would have arrived

- on time.  
b. ?I wish John had (of) left tomorrow instead of next week.

Although the contrast between (18a/21a) and (24) involves the temporal location of the contrasting actual event, the critical factor turns out to be somewhat more abstract. This can be seen by the fact that the examples in (25) are perfectly well formed:

- (25) a. If John had (of) been with us now instead of Sam, we would have been in a stronger position.  
b. I wish John had (of) been with us now instead of Sam.

Even though the examples in (25) do not involve actual contrasting alternatives located in the past, they behave like the examples in (18a/21a) rather than like the examples in (24). The reason for this is that in (25), as in (18a/21a), the time at which the counterfactual event or situation ceased to be a possibility is located in the past. Ippolito (2003, 2007) proposes an account of this kind of effect (involving different types of examples) embedded within her theory of conditional modality and its interaction with tense; I will not pursue this point here.

#### 4. Counterfactual subjunctives versus other types of subjunctives

Let us assume, then, that the English morphological past tense suffix *-ed* conveys subjunctive mood in conditionals and *wish*-complements, and that K2 in these contexts is (unambiguously) a subjunctive perfect. But these are not the only kinds of subjunctive forms in English. It is common to describe the verbs in the subordinate clauses in (26), as being subjunctive:

- (26) a. We demand that he leave immediately.  
b. We insist that they be hired.

This type of subjunctive is morphologically identical to the uninflected (nonfinite) root form of the verb. It is characteristic of American English; British English typically uses indicative or modal verb forms in these contexts instead:

- (27) a. We demand that he leaves immediately.  
b. We insist that they should be hired.

Leaving aside the British/American contrast, the question arises how to characterize the difference between the type of subjunctive that occurs in contexts like (26) and the type that occurs in subjunctive conditionals and *wish*-complements. These forms are not interchangeable, at least in unaffected Modern English:

- (28) a. If I were/was/\*be a terrorist, I would keep a low profile.  
b. I wish John were/was/\*be here.  
c. We demand that they be/\*were/\*was hired.
- (29) a. If John left/\*leave tomorrow, he would arrive in Paris on Friday.  
b. I wish John lived/\*live nearby.

- c. If John had (of) left/\*leave/\*have left tomorrow instead of today, ...
- d. I wish John had (of) left/\*leave/\*have left tomorrow instead of today,...

Should both forms be described as subjunctive? If so, how should we distinguish them from each other? At this point I will adopt the following terminological distinction: I will refer to the subjunctives in (26) as *mandative subjunctives*, and (at the risk of being misleading) I will refer to the subjunctives in conditionals and *wish*-complements as *counterfactual subjunctives*. Note that counterfactual subjunctives include both subjunctive perfects (including K2) and non-perfect subjunctives encoded by *-ed* (including both *was* and *were* in the case of the copula).

Both types of subjunctives correspond to subjunctive forms in at least some other languages. The counterfactual subjunctive corresponds closely to the German Konjunktiv II, among others, while the mandative subjunctive corresponds to the subjunctive in languages such as French and Spanish. If both types of verb forms are subjunctive, what property or properties do they share, and what distinguishes between them?

Guided in part by the spirit of Iatridou's project of providing a unified semantics for past tense and what I am now calling the counterfactual subjunctive, it is tempting to describe the grammatical contrast between the mandative and counterfactual subjunctives in terms of tense, analyzing mandative subjunctives as present-tense subjunctives, and counterfactual subjunctives as past-tense subjunctives. One reason why this is appealing is that the mandative subjunctive often corresponds to a present subjunctive or infinitive in other languages, whereas the counterfactual subjunctive often involves a morphological element (such as English *-ed*) that is also used to convey simple preterit past tense.

But we have already seen that the use of the morphological past tense suffix *-ed* in weakly counterfactual subjunctives is not generally associated with past-tense semantics. Only if the perfect is also present, in the subjunctive perfect (including K2), is semantic past tense involved, suggesting that, when *-ed* conveys subjunctive mood, the past tense is conveyed by the perfect rather than by *-ed*. Since the critical morpho-syntactic element distinguishing counterfactual subjunctives in general from mandative subjunctives is the presence of *-ed*, it is misleading to characterize the difference between the two types of subjunctive in terms of tense.

When we look outside of English, the number of different types of subjunctives expands further; in many languages, subjunctive clauses can be used in contexts where neither the English counterfactual subjunctive forms (including K2) nor the English mandative subjunctive forms can be used. For example, in French, the subjunctive is licensed under the domain of negation, but in English, neither the counterfactual subjunctive (including K2) nor the mandative subjunctive is licensed in this environment:

- (30)
- a. \*Nobody believed that he were/be here
  - b. \*Nobody said that he live here
  - b. \*Nobody said that you had of left
  - b. \*John didn't think he had of invited you

Furthermore, in some languages, such as Spanish, subjunctives contrast with indicatives when they occur in relative clauses, conveying an intensional, or *de dicto*, sense, in contrast to the *de re* interpretation of indicative relatives. Nothing of the sort is possible with the English counterfactual subjunctives, including K2:

- (31) a. Max said that he would marry a woman who was (\*were) intelligent  
 b. Max (would have) said that he would only marry a woman who had (\*of) earned a lot of money by the time she reached the age of 30

Summarizing the main point of this section, K2 does behave like a subjunctive, but it is a particular subtype of subjunctive (the counterfactual subjunctive), whose syntactic distribution is different from that of the mandative subjunctive, and severely limited in comparison with subjunctives in many other languages.

## 5. Further aspects of English counterfactual subjunctives and Sequence of Tense

In the previous section, I argued that the counterfactual subjunctive should not be analyzed as a past tense counterpart of the mandative ("present") subjunctive, since the distinguishing property of the counterfactual subjunctive is the presence of *-ed*, which is used in these contexts to convey counterfactual subjunctive mood rather than semantic past tense per se. But in Section 3, I argued that, when the subjunctive perfect (including K2 in the informal register) is used in counterfactual conditionals and *wish*-complements, *-ed* conveys subjunctive mood, and the perfect signals the presence of a covert past tense. Thus, there *is* a kind of past subjunctive in English, but this past subjunctive is *not* the counterfactual subjunctive in general, but rather the subjunctive perfect (including K2) in particular, insofar as it is only the subjunctive perfect that conveys both subjunctive mood and past tense.

If the subjunctive perfect is a past subjunctive, its present tense counterpart is the non-perfect counterfactual subjunctive (*-ed*), as in (28a-b) and (29a-b), and not the type of subjunctive that shows up in mandative contexts. This can be shown in two ways. The first involves cases where the mandative complement has a past tense interpretation. The semantics of mandative predicates precludes an indexical past-tense interpretation in the complement, since they involve demands or requests involving future events or situations. Nevertheless a relative past-shifted interpretation is marginally possible in examples like (32)

- (32) a. I demand that he have left the party before I arrive.  
 b. I ask that you have written up your assignments by lunchtime.

To my ear, (32a-b) sound awkward, and perhaps only marginally grammatical, for reasons that I do not understand. In any case, they are far better than (33a-b), with the finite subjunctive perfect (including K2):

- (33) a. \*I demand that he had (of) left the party before I arrive.  
 b. \*I ask that you had (of) written up your assignments by lunchtime.

Thus, there are actually two distinct types of subjunctive perfects: counterfactual subjunctive perfects (K2 in the informal register) and mandative subjunctive perfects like those in (32).

Another way of showing that the counterfactual subjunctive perfect is not a past-tense counterpart to the present-tense mandative subjunctive concerns environments where we might expect sequence-of-tense effects to arise. In particular, the counterfactual subjunctive perfect (including K2) cannot occur in the subjunctive complement of a mandative matrix verb, even if the matrix clause contains past tense, as in (34a-b), and even if the matrix clause is itself the subjunctive protasis of a counterfactual conditional, as in (34c):

- (34) a. \*We demanded that he had (of) left immediately.  
 b. \*We requested that she had (of) been hired  
 c. \*If they had (of) demanded that you had (of) left, we would have objected.

In these environments, the present subjunctive always shows up instead:

- (35) a. We demanded that he leave immediately.  
 b. We requested that she be hired.  
 c. If they had (of) demanded that you leave, we would have objected.

This would, *prima facie*, be surprising, if counterfactual subjunctives were (morphologically) past tense variants of mandative subjunctives, since English exhibits sequence of tense, and Spanish exhibits a subjunctive counterpart to indicative sequence of tense in this kind of environment.

Interestingly, the mandative subjunctive perfect is also blocked here, at least on the relevant "simultaneous" sequence-of-tense interpretation:

- (35) a. \*We demanded that he have left immediately.  
 b. \*We requested that she have been hired.  
 c. \*If they had (of) demanded that you have left, we would have objected.

Apparently, the perfect here cannot be licensed by a main clause past tense external to the mandative subjunctive complement; its licensing is strictly local.

A related point concerns the locality of subjunctive mood licensing. Quer (1998) contrasts subjunctives licensed by lexical verbs like 'want' from those licensed by operators such as negation, noting that whereas negation-licensed subjunctive mood may recur in complements of attitude verbs embedded within negative main clauses, lexically licensed subjunctives are strictly local, and occur only in the immediate clausal complement of the matrix licensing verb. He conjectures that the difference in locality is determined by the nature of the element licensing the subjunctive: lexical licensors select subjunctive mood only locally, whereas licensors that are logical operators (such as negation) license subjunctive non-locally.

With *wish*-complements, counterfactual subjunctive mood licensing is local, as Quer's account leads us to expect; this is true of both perfect and nonperfect forms:

- (36) a. \*I wish John had of thought that Bill **had of** left  
 b. \*I wish John were of the opinion that Bill **were** a nice guy.

Interestingly, however, subjunctive conditionals also involve strictly local licensing of subjunctive mood, contrary to the expectations of Quer's account (assuming that conditionals involve operator licensing rather than lexical licensing):

- (37) a. \*If Sam had of claimed (that Bill **had of** believed) that Sue **had of** been dishonest...  
 b. \*If you had of been told by someone that I **had of** been a liar, would you have defended me?

- c. \*If Sam were to say that Sue **were** ugly, I would clobber him.

This suggests that a factor other than the distinction between lexical verbs and logical operators is at work here. A plausible alternative is that local subjunctive licensing generally involves a modal operator, which is plausibly present in the complements of all lexical verbs selecting subjunctive complements, including deontic necessity modals selected by mandative verbs of the *demand/ask* class, bouletic modals selected by *want*-class verbs, and the type of modal that shows up in counterfactual environments, including both the complements of wish-predicates and subjunctive conditionals.

Although counterfactual subjunctive mood is not licensed non-locally in (37), conventional sequence-of-tense marking may occur in these same contexts:

- (38) a. If Max had of claimed that Bill **believed** that Sue **was** dishonest, ...  
b. If Sam had of claimed that Sue **was** ugly, I would clobber him  
c. If Sam were told by someone that I **was** a liar, would you defend me?
- (42) a. I wish he had of thought that I **was** as friendly as other people think I am.  
b. I wish Sam had of believed that he **was** intelligent.  
c. I wish he had of been of the opinion that I **was** his friend.

To my ear, these examples allow simultaneous (SOT) interpretations of the boldface copular verbs only when the K2 in the protasis has a past tense interpretation, suggesting it is the past-shifting tense licensed by the perfect in the K2 that licenses this.

With respect to these strict locality effects, the past perfect in the formal register behaves like K2 in being ungrammatical in non-local licensing environments when it conveys simultaneity, presumably confirming our claim that, whenever the past perfect is used to convey counterfactuality in conditionals and complements to *wish/rather*, it is in its subjunctive form.

## 6. Inversion in Conditionals

English allows inversion of certain auxiliary verbs in the protases of subjunctive conditionals, in which case the inverted auxiliary verb precludes the occurrence of *if*, as is well known:

- (43) a. If John were to rejoin the team, we would win.  
b. If John had not left early, we might have won.
- (44) a. Were John to rejoin the team, we would win.  
b. Had John not left early, we might have won.

The English present subjunctive is now archaic in conditional contexts, but it likewise allowed inversion:

- (45) a. He is happiest, **be he** king or peasant, who finds peace in his home.  
(translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)
- b. **Be he ne'er** so vile, This day shall gentle his condition. (Shakespeare, Henry V)

Actually, *were* and *had* are the only auxiliary verbs (except for *should*, in some dialects) that can undergo inversion in conditionals. Even the simple past form *was* (which, I suggested above, is ambiguous between indicative past and subjunctive in most informal registers and in dialects that lack subjunctive *were*) does not allow it:

- (46) a. If John was to rejoin the team, we might win.  
b. If John didn't belong to the team, we would be having problems.
- (47) a. \*Was John to rejoin the team, we might win.  
b. \*Did John not belong to the team, we would be having problems.

The contrast between (44a) and (47a) might indicate that *was* in (47a), unlike *were* in (44a), is not a true subjunctive, contrary to what I claimed in Section 2. One way that we might try to distinguish between *were* and *was*, while preserving the central insight of Section 2, would be to exploit the notion of a "subjunctive polarity item" invoked above in reference to *of/have* in K2. Specifically, one might claim that, whereas *were* is a true subjunctive mood marker with modal force, *was* is subjunctive polarity item that must be licensed by a (covert) subjunctive modal. The idea, then, would be that, whereas the true subjunctive *were* can displace *if* in conditional inversion constructions, the polarity item *was* disallows this option, since in the inversion construction the subjunctive polarity item would be raised above its covert subjunctive licenser.

K2 contains subjunctive *had*, and it freely allows inversion; the following examples are drawn from naturalistic data on the internet:

- (48) a. **Had you not of** posted about my "complaint", then you wouldn't have hijacked this thread with me.
- b. **Yes Anna i do love you and doubt i could have survived the year at Kingston had you not of** been there.
- c. "Respecting your houses Sir, they will shorely be built agreeable to your directions, and would have been **had I not have** heard from you at all as I had ... (Archive of George Washington's writings)
- d. I would also state that they would have been removed sooner **had I not have** been interfered with by unprincipled white men.
- e. He could have saved his life **had he only of** given her what she wanted.
- cf. f. I think God, **were He** to exist, would be a "cat person".

These facts are, of course, consistent with the view that the *-ed* affix in K2 conveys true subjunctive mood.

## 7. A Variant form of the Subjunctive

The modal perfect form of the conditional *would* (*would have* or *would of*) occurs in the

same environments as K2 in some English dialects; naturalistic examples from the web are provided in (49). A possible parallel with German K2 arises here too, since German often prefers to use the subjunctive form *würde*+infinitive instead of the normal K2.

- (49)
- a. **if you would of** discussed this issue with him, I'm sure he would of justified his actions
  - b. **If you would of** printed the entire context things would of looked much different.
  - c. **If he would of** got his personal problems solved I would of loved to see the guy at Wrestlemania 12.
  - d. **If he would of** wrestled today, he would be more popular than Stone Cold or The Rock.
  - e. Don't worry about the things you **wish you would have** brought
  - f. I just **wish there would of** been better games to take advantage of the power
  - g. Deep in my heart I **wish there would of** been a way to tell him that.

This form behaves like K2 in many respects, and in fact is homophonous with K2 when the finite auxiliary verb (*had* or *would*) is phonologically reduced as a clitic attached to a preceding subject pronoun (or, marginally, of a vowel-final name or noun):

- (50)
- a. I wish I'd of been there
  - b. If there'd of been more people at the meeting, we'd of had a quorum
  - c. \*I wish John'd of left
  - d. ?If Lee'd of been at the party, she'd of had a good time
  - e. ?I wish Sue'd of told me that she was angry

Like K2, these conditional forms do not occur in mandative subjunctive contexts, and seem to be restricted in terms of locality (on the relevant reading of simultaneity):

- (51)
- a. \*We demanded that he would of left.
  - b. \*If you would of believed that I would of been your friend, ...
  - c. \*I wish you would told me that you would of been angry at me

I will refer to this form as the conditional K2.

The existence of this variant form raises the question whether the English K2 should simply be treated as a variant form of the conditional. This is doubtful, however, since the (non-conditional) K2 is completely excluded from the consequent clause of a conditional:

- (52)
- a. \*If he had of got his personal problems solved I had of loved to see the guy at Wrestlemania 12
  - b. \*If you had of used a trust, you had of avoided probate.

I will not pursue a detailed investigation of the internal syntax of these forms here. Nevertheless the apparent parallel between this construction non-standard English dialects and its counterpart in Standard German is striking, and perhaps indicative of a shared origin.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper I have explored the syntax and semantics of the English K2 construction within the context of a broader investigation of subjunctive verb forms in the language. I have argued that the K2 should be analyzed as a subjunctive perfect form, where the subjunctive is conveyed by the affix *-ed*, and the perfect functions as a past polarity item signaling the presence of a past tense located either in the same clause or higher in the tree. The type of subjunctive mood that occurs in this construction (which I have referred to, somewhat misleadingly, as the counterfactual subjunctive) must be distinguished from the mandative subjunctive mood that occurs in the complements of *demand/ask* class verbs. Both types of subjunctive are licensed strictly locally, in contrast to the subjunctive mood licensed by negation in languages such as French; I have suggested that this is related to the modal force of the subjunctive in these contexts. The particle *of/have* is a subjunctive polarity item, disambiguating the subjunctive perfect from the indicative past perfect.

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