

# Conditional Clauses

Latin MILC – W5, HT 2013

February 12, 2013

## 1 Types of Conditional Clauses

All conditional clauses are made up of two parts: an if-clause (protasis), and an independent clause (apodosis) which reflects the results of the condition.

Conditional Clauses are introduced by either *si*, *nisi* 'if not; unless', *sive ... sive* 'if either ... or if' or *si non* 'if not', which negates a particular word of the protasis rather than the whole clause. *Sin* 'but if' is used to present an alternative to a previous condition; it can but need not stand alone.

A general rule of conditional clauses is that of modal congruity - if one clause contains a subjunctive, so will the other; the same applies for the indicative.

### 1.1 Indefinite

If the relation of sentence to reality is left open, or if axiomatic, general matters are discussed, Latin will use the indicative in both conditionals. They occur almost exclusively in the present or perfect tense.

- (1) *Si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest.*  
If blissful life can be lost, it is not truly blissful.
- (2) If I ask you something, will you answer?  
*Si te rogavero aliquid, nonne respondebis?*

Be aware that if a future is used in the apodosis, you are best advised to use a future perfect in the protasis (sometimes, but unhelpfully, called the 'future-more-vivid').

*Sive ... sive* is always used with the indicative. The same is true for *nisi forte*, *nisi vero* 'unless of course' (as an ironic interjection).

- (3) *Hoc loco libentissime soleo uti, sive quid mecum ipse cogito, sive quid scribo aut lego.*  
I like coming to this spot, be it to think about something by myself, be it to read or write something.
- (4) Enough with this discussion, unless of course you are still missing something?  
*Satis disputatum est de hac re, nisi forte quid desideratis.*

### 1.2 Potential

If the relation of sentence and reality is a distinct possibility, the subjunctive present or perfect is employed in both protasis and apodosis (sometimes called the 'future-less-vivid').

- (5) *Si quid scriptum sit obscure, de re dubites.*  
If something is written unclearly, you may also have doubts about its content.
- (6) I could not, if I wanted to, nor would want to, if I could, imitate the speeches of Thucydides.  
*Orationes Thucydidis imitari neque possim, si velim, nec velim fortasse, si possim.*

### 1.3 Irreal

If the content of the sentence is judged to be generally impossible, the imperfect subjunctive is used for the present, the pluperfect subjunctive for the past.

- (7) *Si scriberem ipse, longior epistula esset.*  
If I wrote myself, the letter would be longer.
- (8) If you had come to the army, the military tribunes would have seen you.  
*Si venisses ad exercitum, a tribunis militaribus visus esses.*

## 2 Complications

### 2.1 Dependency & Nuance

Expressions of ability, potentiality and necessity in the apodosis are at times used in the indicative in irreal cases. A rule of thumb: 'must' is more frequently set in the indicative, 'can, should' more frequently in the subjunctive.

- (9) *Si unum diem morati essetis, moriendum omnibus fuit.*  
If you had stayed for one more day, everyone would have had to die.
- (10) *Quid facere potuissem, nisi tum consul fuisset?*  
What could I have done, had I not been consul?

If the apodosis of an irreal conditional is dependent on a verb of saying or perception, or any expression governing an accusative with infinitive construction, the if clause remains unchanged; the apodosis, in both present and past cases, is expressed by the future participle and *fuisse*.

- (11) *Videmur quieturi fuisse, nisi essemus lacessiti.*  
Obviously we would have remained calm, had we not been provoked.
- (12) *Quid censes? Si ratio esset in beluis, non suo quasque generi plurimum tributuras fuisse?*  
What do you think? If animals were rational, would they not each value their own kind the most?

If the conditional clause is dependent on a subjunctive subordinate clause or an indirect question, nothing changes, except in the past irreal conditional: here, the apodosis now is formed with the future participle and the perfect subjunctive of *esse* (unless such a form does not exist).

- (13) *Ostendi qualis tu, si ita forte accidisset, fueris illo tempore consul futurus.*  
You now show how, if perchance it had come to that, you would have behaved as consul at that time.
- (14) *Dubitare nemo debet, quin multos, si posset, Caesar ab inferis excitaret.*  
No one may doubt that, if he could, Caesar would call up many people from the Underworld.

### 2.2 Limitations

'If only' and 'as long as' are expressed by *si modo*, and most frequently take an indicative.

- (15) *Facilis est res, si modo unum omnes sentimus.*  
The matter is simple, as long as we are all of the same opinion.

Wishes with limitations, expressed by *dum, dum modo, modo* 'as long as' or 'if', usually take a subjunctive.

- (16) *Oderint, dum metuant!*  
Let them be hateful, as long as they also fear me!
- (17) *Si cui video segnior fuisse, dum ne tibi videar, non laboro.*  
I don't care if I seem rather lazy to someone, as long as you don't have this impression.

### 3 Assignment

#### 3.1 Translate into Latin

Please translate this as a piece of continuous prose.

When Athens was flourishing under just laws, liberty grown wanton embroiled the city, and license relaxed the reins of ancient discipline. Upon this, the partisans of factions conspiring, Pisistratus the Tyrant seized the citadel. When the Athenians were lamenting their sad servitude (not that he was cruel, but because every burden is grievous to those who are unused to it), and began to complain, Æsop related a Fable to the following effect:

“The Frogs, roaming at large in their marshy fens, with loud clamour demanded of Jupiter a king, who, by his authority, might check their dissolute manners. The Father of the Gods smiled, and gave them a little Log, which, on being thrown among them startled the timorous race by the noise and sudden commotion in the bog. When it had lain for some time immersed in the mud, one of them by chance silently lifted his head above the water, and having taken a peep at the king, called up all the rest. Having got the better of their fears, vying with each other, they swim towards him, and the insolent mob leap upon the Log. After defiling it with every kind of insult, they sent to Jupiter, requesting another king, because the one that had been given them was useless. Upon this, he sent them a Water Snake, who with his sharp teeth began to gobble them up one after another. Helpless they strive in vain to escape death; terror deprives them of voice. By stealth, therefore, they send through Mercury a request to Jupiter, to succour them in their distress. Then said the God in reply: ‘Since you would not be content with your good fortune, continue to endure your bad fortune.’”  
“Do you also, O fellow-citizens,” said Æsop, “submit to the present evil, lest a greater one befall you.”

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Please hand in your assignment by Friday 6pm, either by email to *robin.meyer@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk*, or by pigeon post to *Robin Meyer, Wolfson College, Linton Rd.*