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Conditional sentence constructions in English: Frequencies and distribution in American and British English A corpus- based study

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Abstract:

This study is a corpus-based research, which investigates patterns and frequency of use of conditional sentence (CS) constructions, with four conditional conjunctions (CCs): if, unless, provided that and on condition that. Data is obtained from two corpora,; the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Further, this study examines the patterns and frequency of use of those CCs in spoken, written and different sections of COCA and BNC. This study also investigates the most frequently used collocates with subjunctive conditionals (if I/she/ he/it were) in the spoken and written subsections of BNC and COCA. The results showed that frequency of use of subjunctive conditionals is more common in the written subsection of BNC, whereas it is more frequent in the spoken subsection of COCA. Cross sectional distribution showed that the usage of idiomatic expressions is dominant in fiction in both corpora.

Key Words: Corpus-based, Conditional sentence constructions, Conditional conjunctions, Conditional idiomatic expressions.

بنية الجملة الشرطية في اللغة الإنجليزية: التكرارات والتوزيع في الإنجليزية الأمريكية والبريطانية

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ملخص:

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في استخدامات الجمل الشرطية بالاعتماد على المدونات النصية وتحليل انماط استخدامها وتكرارها بالتركيز على أربع أدوات شرطية: "إذا" و"الا اذا" و"ما لم" و"بشرط". ان البيانات تمثل مدونتين نصيتين للناطقين باللغة الانجليزية كلغة ام: The Corpus of the British National و Contemporary American English (COCA) و Corpus(BNC). وتبحث الدراسة في معدل تكرار استخدامها في اللغة الانجليزية المحكية والمكتوبة وفي الاقسام المختلفة في كل من المدونتين النصيتين. وتبحث الدراسة في الاستخدام الاصطلاحي الشرطي مع الفعل **(if I/she/ he/it) were** في اللغة الانجليزية المكتوبة والمحكية على حد سواء. وأظهرت النتائج ان استخدام الجمل الشرطية الافتراضية مع الفعل **were** كتعابير اصطلاحية أكثر تكراراً في النصوص المكتوبة في BNC، الا انها أكثر تكراراً في اللغة المحكية في COCA. واطهرت النتائج ايضا ان هذه التعابير الاصطلاحية أكثر استخداماً في قسم(الخيال) في كل من المدونتين النصيتين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل بالاعتماد على المدونات النصية، الجمل الشرطية، أدوات الشرط، التعبيرات الشرطية الاصطلاحية.

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Introduction

The present study aims at investigating the *if-conditionals* existing in the spoken and written sections of both the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). It examines the frequency of use of four conditional conjunctions (henceforth CCs) in both corpora and cross sections (spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper and academic): *If, unless, provided that and on condition that*. In general, CCs are used to describe the **reliance** of one circumstance or set of circumstances on another to describe hypothetical situations, explain why something has happened, will happen, or are currently happening (Quirk and Greenbaum 2004). According to Declerck & Reed (2001: 9), conditional constructions are two-clause structures “in which one of the clauses is introduced by if [...] or by **a word or phrase that has a meaning similar to if**”. The description of conditional sentences in the literature from grammar to discourse analysis provides a wide range of approaches to their functions and meanings semantically, syntactically and pragmatically. Corpus linguistics adds another layer of meaning to linguistic patterns manifested by speakers when using conditionals in English.

Literature review:

1. CS constructions in English:

Conditional sentences are manifold structures. Speakers/writers use them to express different situations, ideas and expectations whether they are real or imaginary, possible or impossible. Scholars and linguists have approached CS constructions semantically, syntactically, logically and from a discursal perspective to provide a better understanding of such structure, how it is used and why. Traugott, Meulen, Reilly and Ferguson (1986), as cited in Xu (2015), have argued that using conditional sentences show how humans are able to reason about different and alternative situations, to make inferences based on incomplete information, and to imagine how those situations would be different if the truth value of one part is changed. There are many definitions of conditionals in the literature. Some researchers focus on the compositional meaning of conditionals which is derived from its constituent parts, namely: *if*-clause (also called condition, antecedent, or protasis), and the consequent (also called main clause, result or apodosis). In addition, Stalcker defines conditional sentences as statements that express “a proposition which is a function of two other propositions, yet not one which is a truth function of those propositions” (1968: 98). The conditional function is presented by “If... then” formula. The antecedent clause is

preceded by a conjunction which is usually "*if*" in English language. **It is important to mention that** some syntactic elements such as: verb tense, time relation and mood are responsible for determining the meaning of conditional sentences.

The logical and semantic classification of conditional sentences, on the other hand, is based on the truth value which conditionals hold. Sweetser (1990) has categorized conditionals into: content, epistemic and speech act conditional clauses. Content conditionals are interpreted according to the truth value of their component clauses. i.e., "it is a causal relation between the protasis and apodosis" (Xu, 2015, p.8). Epistemic conditionals refer to what is possible to happen, i.e., that the hypothetical condition made in the protasis should be enough to bring truth of the conclusion in the apodosis.

Other researchers define conditionals in terms of their social use as Dancygier (2009) (cited in Jimaima (2014)) who refers to conditionals as "multi-fold structures" which "directly reflect the language user's ability to reason about alternatives, uncertainties and unrealized contingencies"(2014:4). He classifies conditionals according to their social behavior which involves their construction and their interpretation. Conditionals are also examined in terms of cause-effect relationship (Cummins et al., 1991, & Bhatt and Pancheva, 2005). They concluded that conditional sentences convey a wide range of messages in conversations due to "the multitude of conversational implicatures" they include (Cummins et al, 1991: 274).

Johnson-Laird and Byrne (2002) investigated conditionals from a psychological perspective. They claimed that interpreting the meaning of conditionals is a correlation between shared knowledge, semantics and pragmatics. CH Elder (2012) examined conditionals in English based on semantic-pragmatic criteria to explore how conditionals may be expressed in English without using the conjunction "if". The sample was gathered from the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB). CH Elder concluded that conditional meaning may be constructed through the interaction of different levels of communication to derive the intended conditional meaning and that is why conditionals can be used and expressed in a wide variety of ways.

Moreover, Tuan (2012) conducted a study to determine difficulties facing Vietnamese EFL learners when dealing with English conditionals. The instrument used was a survey questionnaire and interviews. The researcher found out that interference and the complex structure of

conditional sentences play a major role in student's performance when using or processing conditionals. Lai-chun (2005) examined the syntactic differences between English and Chinese and how Chinese as a mother tongue of the ESL learners, affects their acquisition and understanding of English conditionals. The researcher found out that L1 transfer and the syntactic complexity of English conditionals are the major problems that EFL learners encounter.

The syntactic description of conditionals concentrates on the different verb forms that might signal temporal reference, factual and counterfactual situations. Grammar references and EFL textbooks describe three conventional types of if-conditionals: type I, type II and type III. Type one usually utilizes *present simple* in the *protasis* and *will+ base* form of the main verb in the *apodosis* (e.g. 1, 2 and 3). Yet the present continuous, present perfect simple and present perfect continuous are also used in the *protasis* (e.g. 4 & 5).

1. If it **rains**, the wedding reception **will be delayed**.
2. If we **don't hurry**, **she'll miss** the bus.
3. The baby **will fall down** if you **leave** it by itself.
4. If you're **having** ten people to lunch, you'll **need** more chairs.
5. If **we have finished** our shift by ten, I'll probably invite you to dinner.

In type II, the traditional pattern used is *simple past* in the *protasis* and *would +base* form of the main verb in the *apodosis* (e.g. 6 & 7).

6. *If I **had** lots of money, I **would buy** a fancy car.*
7. *If I **had** the time, I **would visit** my grandmother.*

Past *continuous*, *could* and *would like* are possible to be used in the *protasis* too, and modal verbs such as *might*, *should* and *could* are also used in the *apodosis* (e.g. 8, 9 & 10).

8. *If the manager **was laughing**, everything **would be** perfect.*
9. *If she **had** lots of money, she **would/should** buy a diamond ring for her mom.*
10. *If I **could talk** to you that day, I **would**, but I **had** lots of things to do.*

The pattern used in type three is *if... + past perfect... + would + perfect* (e.g. 11). Using *would have+ v3* in the *protasis* is so rare in some very informal contexts (e.g. 12). Moreover, *could have+v3* is used in the *protasis* (e.g. 13). *Might have+ v3*, *could have+v3* and *continuous* forms are possible to be used in the *apodosis* (e.g. 14 & 15).

11. *If you **had wakened up** early, you **would have got** here in time.*
12. *If you'd **have wakened up** early, you'd **have got** here on time.*

13. If Andy **could have warned** me in time, he would have done.

14. If they had written the address down, they **could have saved** themselves some trouble.

15. If she hadn't been saying such lies, she **wouldn't have been fired** that way.

2. Corpus linguistics:

Basically, corpus linguistics (CL) attempts to study language use through corpora. A corpus is a "large, principled collection of naturally occurring examples of language stored electronically" (Bennett, 2010: 2). Searching corpora enable scholars to look for patterns related to lexical and grammatical features. Corpora can also unveil information about the frequency of a particular word or expression, differences between spoken and written language, information about the formality of expressions used by speakers, most frequently used idiomatic and collocational expressions and their meanings.

Recently, researchers have used corpora to conduct their analyses of language, because corpora enable them to examine huge quantities of language to discover how patterns are really used. Such analysis cannot be done depending on intuition. Using computerized data allows examiners to come up with clearer and more adequate descriptions of a specific linguistic phenomenon. Corpus-based analysis has proved to be vital to clarify how language works which contributes to different applications such as language teaching, lexicography, translation and many other areas of linguistic analysis.

There are two approaches to corpus linguistics: corpus driven analysis and corpus-based analysis. The former methodology uses corpora as the basis of empirical tests without any prior expectations or assumptions. Therefore, most frequent forms and patterns are extracted and analyzed (lexicography and collocations). The latter approach utilizes corpora as an inventory to prove or refute a hypothesis or an expectation assumed by researchers. Biber (2012:1) describes both approaches stating that "Corpus-based research assumes the validity of linguistic forms and structures derived from linguistic theory. The primary goal of research is to analyze the systematic patterns of variation and use for those pre-defined linguistic features. Corpus driven approach is more inductive, so that the linguistic constructs themselves emerge from analysis of a corpus". Thus, CL has become a wide-spread method for linguists to investigate naturally occurring languages. Another characteristic of CL is that large corpora can

be used to test hypotheses by adding the quantitative dimension to linguistic research.

Corpora:

The data is drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) including the spoken and written forms. Both corpora are available on corpus.byu.edu which has a built-in interface and provides researchers with multiple linguistic searchable features. The British National Corpus (BNC) project was launched and is conducted by the *BNC Consortium* (an industrial/academic consortium led by Oxford University Press) with other participants: dictionary publishers (Addison-Wesley Longman) and Larousse Kingfisher Chambers; academic research centers at Oxford University Computing Services (OUCS), the University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language (UCREL) at Lancaster University, and the British Library's Research and Innovation Centre. Further, this project was financially supported by the Science and Engineering Council (now EPSRC). The corpus building started in 1991 and was finished in 1994. The second edition was released in 2001 and the third edition was released in 2007. The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word, including collections of texts, written and spoken. BNC is created to represent a wide range of sections and genres of British English variety, from the later part of the 20th century.

The **written part** of the BNC is about 90% including: Fiction section which is about 17 million words (e.g., academic books and popular fiction,), Popular magazines genre consists of 16 million words (e.g., published and unpublished letters and memoranda), Newspaper is made up with 11 million words (e.g., extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals for all ages and interests), Academic is about 16 million words (such as: school and university essays and many other academic texts) and other resources that include 30 million words (corpus.byu.edu:2018). The **spoken part of** BNC has a much wider range of spoken sub-genres. It includes 10% from several sources: unscripted informal conversation (recorded by volunteers selected to represent different ages, regions and social classes so that data is demographically balanced), collections of different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins (bnc-queries@rt.oucs.ox.ac.uk: 2005). The following chart shows the difference in million words between COCA and BNC cross-sections. The Corpus of

Contemporary American English (COCA) is the largest, genre-balanced corpus of English. It has been designed and constructed to be a 'monitor corpus, to study changes in English over different periods of time (1990-2017). The corpus consisted of 365 million words the time it was released in early 2008. It is freely available on the web (www.americancorpus.org), and it is continually updated by adding 20 million words each year. The 560 million words corpus (2017) is evenly divided between five different genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. To keep the representativeness of the corpus, genre balance is kept almost exactly the same from 1990 to 2017, which allows to present changes in the naturally occurring language accurately.

Research Questions:

1. What are the most frequent conditional sentence constructions used in BNC and COCA in general in different genres including "if", "unless", "provided that" and "on condition that"?
2. What are the most frequent collocates occurring with the subjunctive conditional clauses specifically and their frequencies and distributions among different genres in COCA and BNC?

Methodology:

The built-in interface on corpus.buy.edu provides quantitative information related to linguistic queries being examined including: raw frequencies and per million frequencies in general and cross sections. The current study compares between spoken and written sub-sections in COCA and BNC. Written sub-corpora are not calculated as one section; therefore calculations are done through using an online website (grammarlab.com).

Moreover, in order to compare between corpora of different size, there is a need to use per million ratio to show significance between results. Therefore, quantitative comparisons between lexical or grammatical items are only possible when the frequency is normalized to the same figure in corpora under examination. In the case of comparing wordlists, it requires that frequency lists are generated in the same way regarding stop lists including: numbers, articles, and punctuation marks. Normalizing raw frequencies is essential to show what are the similarities and differences between corpora, their significance and the different patterns (Meyer, 2002).

Normalized frequency or per million ratio refer to the frequency of an item that is relative to some other value as a proportion of the whole, in other words, it is the frequency of a word relative to the total number of words in a corpus or from two corpora from different size. The common

base of normalization can be set to one million or one thousand tokens. Calculating a normalized frequency is a straightforward process. It is traditionally made by normalizing the frequency of the query item by the total number of words in the corpus, then presenting the results in per thousand or million words. To differentiate between spoken and written English, the following sub-sections are considered to represent the written form of American English: *Fiction, magazines, newspapers and academic*. The total size of the sub-written corpora in COCA and BNC are used as a fixed number to calculate the use of all CCs in written English in this study.

Discussion of results:

1. Distributional frequencies of CCs in COCA and BNC

Table 1 shows raw frequencies and per million ratio of conditional conjunctions: *if, unless, provided that and on condition that* in COCA and BNC. As it shows, all CCs are used more frequently in British English than in American English. The most frequently used conjunction in both varieties is *if* (774.7 PM in COCA and 958.99 PM in BNC), followed by *unless* (67.77 PM in COCA and 106.68 PM in BNC). The least used one is *on condition that* (0.34 PM in COCA and 1.74 PM in BNC). Moreover, Table 1 displays that there are notable differences in the use of CCs under investigation.

Table 1. Frequency of use of *if, unless, provided that and on condition that* in general in COCA and BNC

Conjunction	COCA		BNC	
	Raw frequency	Per million	Raw frequency	Per million
If	433845	774.7	95899	958.99
Unless	38292	67.77	10668	106.68
Provided that	1001	2.22	1103	11.03
On condition that	194	0.34	174	1.74

Celce-Murcia and Larsen–Freeman (1999) stated that many grammar books and ESL texts books introduce *If..not* and *unless* as equivalents, which results in ungrammatical sentences or changing the meaning of CS constructions. Further, *unless (and only if)* identifies conditions that are exclusive. That is, there no other condition will cause the stated consequent.

- 16. a. Don't apply for the job unless you have an M.A
- b. Don't apply for the job if you don't have an M.A

On the other hand, *if/ if...not* describe more neutral conditions, that might other possible conditions also be responsible for the stated consequent. They presented two semantic relationships expressed by CCs (

if, if..not and unless): marked and unmarked relationship between the condition and the result (see Table 2 adapted from Celce- Murcia and Larsen –Freeman (1999: 553).

Table 2.Semantic relationships expressed by CCs between conditions and results

	Affirmative	Negative
1. Open (unmarked) condition	<i>If</i>	<i>If..not</i>
2. Exclusive(marked) condition	<i>Only if(sometimes if and only if)</i>	<i>Unless(= except if)</i>

Quirk and Greenbaum(1973), as cited in Celce-Murcia and Larsen–Freeman (1999), stated that substituting *if...not* with *unless* produces ungrammatical sentences (see 17.a & 21.b) or might result in changing the meaning of the CS construction (see 18.a &22.b)

17. .a.*If* it hadn't been for Zeke's daring rescue, we wouldn't be here.

b.**Unless* it had been for Zeke's daring rescue, we wouldn't be here.

18. a. I couldn't have made it on time *unless* I'd had an executive jet.

b.I couldn't have made it on time *if* I hadn't had an executive jet.

However, Unubi (2013) has argued that *unless* (means *except if*) is the opposite of *provided (that) or providing (that) and on condition that*, which all mean "*if and only if*" (see19&20). There are CCs which are approximately synonymous with *provided (that)* such as: *as long as* and *so long as*.

19. *Provided that* no objection is raised, we will hold the retreat there.

20. He has been granted his freedom *on condition that* he leaves the country.

Unubi (2013:206) has stated that "the main subordinators in English are *if* and *unless*". Hasselgård(2016) also conducted a study on CS constructions introduced by *If* and *unless* in novice academic English to compare between Norwegian learners and native speakers of English. The data was obtained from the *Varieties of English for Specific Purposes database* (VESPA) to represent Norwegian advanced learners of English, and the *British Academic Written English* (BAWE) corpus, representing English L1 students in British universities. Hasselgård analyzed CS constructions syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. The researcher found out that the distributional frequency of *If* and *unless* is similar in both corpora, VESPA and BAWE, that is *unless* CS constructions were marginal, while *if* CS constructions were dominant. *If* recorded 91.2% and 84.3 in VESPA and BAWE respectively. Whereas *unless* recorded 2.4% and 0.9 in VESPA and BAWE respectively. Furthermore, Farr and McCarthy conducted a study (2002) which compared between POTTI corpus (Post-Observation-Teacher-Training Interactions) which includes 60,000-word with CANCODE

(Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English), concentrating on three conditional conjunctions: *if*, *maybe*, and *perhaps*. Their findings showed that *if* occurred more frequently than *maybe* and *perhaps*, respectively in two sub-corpora from CANCODE: sub-corpus of everyday socializing interactions (including 2.6-million-word) and the spoken academic sub-corpus (including around 340,000 words). Further, the frequency of occurrence of *if* in POTTI also exceeded the other two conjunctions, and *perhaps* recorded more occurrences than *maybe*. Furthermore, Narayanan, Liu and Choudhary (2009) conducted a sentiment analysis of conditional sentences to determine if opinions expressed by using CS constructions bear positive, negative or neutral connotations. They found out *if* is the most common conjunction used with CS constructions (64.2%) followed by *unless* (32%),

Bujak's (2014) argued that although *if* is the most frequent conjunction used to introduce CS constructions, yet it is not actually the only possibility. There are expressions we may use to introduce conditional construction such as: *whether*, *even if*, *in case*, *in the event that*, *unless*, *if only*, *on condition (that)*, *provided that*, *providing that*, *suppose that*, *supposing that*, *as/so long as*, *assuming (that)*, *given (that)*, *just so (that)*.

Table 3. Frequency of use of *if*, *unless*, *provided that* and *on condition that* in spoken and written sub-corpora in COCA and BNC

Conjunction	COCA				BNC			
	Spoken		Written		Spoken		Written	
	Raw frequency	PM	Raw frequency	PM	Raw frequency	PM	Raw frequency	PM
If	122,290	1,047.46	311,555	686.8	12,084	1,212.81	83,815	1,957.12
Unless	8,250	70.66	30,042	66.23	1,264	126.85	9400	191.84
Provided that	98	0.84	903	1.99	17	1.71	1,086	22.16
On condition that	14	0.12	180	0.396	3	0.30	171	3.49

Table 3 shows that *If* is more frequently used than *unless*, *provided that* and *on condition that* in both corpora: in spoken sub-sections *if* was used about 1,047.46 PM in COCA while 1,212.81PM in BNC , whereas in written sub- sections *if* was used 686.8 PM in COCA and 1,957.12 PM in BNC.

In COCA, *If* and *unless* are more commonly used in the spoken form (*if*: 1,047.46 PM in COCA, while *unless* was about: 70.66 PM in COCA), on the other hand, *provided that* (1.99 PM in COCA and 22.16 in BNC) and

on condition that (0.396 PM in COCA and 3.49 in BNC) are more commonly used in the written sub-section of COCA and BNC. In the case of the frequency of the CCs used in BNC, **all of them are used more commonly by British writers than speakers**. Apparently, CS constructions seem to be a feature of British written language.

Table 4. CS conjunctions across sections of COCA and BNC (per million)

Sub-sections	If		Unless		Provided that		On condition that	
	COCA	BNC	COCA	BNC	COCA	BNC	COCA	BNC
Fiction	723.72	923.11	68.27	90.39	0.55	1.63	0.21	1.01
Magazine	901.49	1,053.15	70.55	88.13	1.35	3.99	0.38	1.24
Newspaper	607.86	519.76	69.58	81.50	0.99	1.43	0.61	1.62
Academic	509.92	1,098.97	56.23	156.02	5.13	28.76	0.38	2.09

Table 4 shows discrepancies regarding the frequency of use of CCs among subsections of COCA and BNC. For example, *If* and *unless* are more commonly used in *magazine* sub-corpus in COCA (*if*: 901.49 PM, *unless*: 70.55 PM), whereas they are least used in *academic* (*if*: 509.92 PM, *unless*: 56.23). Surprisingly, in BNC, *If* and *unless* are more frequently used in *academic* sub-corpus (*if*: 1,098.97 PM, *unless*: 156.02 PM) and least used in *newspaper* sub-section (*if*: 519.76 PM, *unless*: 81.50 PM). In addition, *provided that* and *on condition that* are more frequently used in the **written texts** of the **BNC** and **COCA**.

2. Idiomatic use of subjunctive Conditionals: Frequencies and distributional analysis in COCA and BNC.

Another point the current study attempts to test is related to the most frequent collocates occurring with the subjunctive conditional clauses, and to examine their frequencies and distributions among different genres in COCA and BNC.

The subjunctive mood is closely related to modal verbs, and it is used in English to express necessity and obligation (Leech, Hundt, Mair, & Smith: 2009). Basically, the Subjunctive verb forms were common in Old English, and then it disappeared in Middle English. However, in the 20th century, it has re-appeared in American English and has started to return in British English as well (Leech et al: 2009). Some analysts claim that the reason for using subjunctive verb-forms in American English is due to a rise in prestigious usage of the subjunctive, and because many immigrants who generalize the use of subjunctive in their mother tongue to English. On the

other hand, British speakers are influenced by the American use of subjunctive verb form usage leading to a rise in its use in the UK.

In conditional sentences, it is used to indicate situations and events which are unlikely to happen as some modal auxiliaries express such as: *could* and *might*. Many scholars have claimed that subjunctive is not a significant aspect in contemporary English grammar, and it is dying out with some exceptions related to some idiomatic uses: using the subjunctive with conditional sentences as in "*if I were, if she were, if he were* and *if it were*" (Johansson and Norheim: 1988, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik: 1985).

Interestingly, the verb *to be* shows a clear contrast in the past tense between indicative *was* and subjunctive *were* with the first and third person singular subjects. The *were-subjunctive* refers to a hypothetical or unreal meaning, and is used in some adverbial clauses introduced by CCs such as: *as if, if, even if, what if* and so on.

The formal aspects of subjunctive conditionals include the following verb forms (*were/were to/ were+ v-ing*) in the protasis, whereas *would/could/should/might +base* are used in the *apodosis* (Table 5).

Table 5. Frequency of formal aspects of subjunctive conditionals included in COCA and BNC

Subjunctive conditionals (in protasis)	COCA	BNC
If I were	1479	144
If I were to	379	43
If I were+ v(ing)	210	18
If she were	298	58
If she were to	68	12
If she were+ v(ing)	34	0
If he were	522	69
If he were to	157	30
If he were +v (ing)	57	5
If it were	1615	300
If it were to	83	32
If it were +v (ing)	12	5
Total	4914	716
Per million ratio	8.78	7.16

Table 5 shows that there is a slight difference in the use of the subjunctive conditionals between COCA (8.78 PM) and BNC (7.16 PM).

Table 6. Cross sectional distribution of subjunctive conditionals with "if I/he/she/it were" in subsections of BNC

	spoken	fiction	magazine	newspaper	Non-academic	academic	misc
If I were	20	111	13	11	16	7	27
If he were	2	45	3	5	9	13	27
If she were	2	51	7	2	2	4	8
If it were	18	76	30	21	51	86	55
Total	42	283	53	39	78	110	117
Per mil ratio	4.2	17.8	7.26	3.71	4.73	7.19	5.63

Apparently, "*if I/he/she/it were*" idiomatic expressions were used more commonly in *fiction* in BNC, and then in *academic* sub-corpus, 17.8 PM and 7.19 PM respectively. The least use is recorded in newspaper sub-section (Table 6).

Table 7. Cross sectional distribution of subjunctive conditionals with "if I/he/she/it were" in subsections of COCA

	spoken	fiction	magazine	newspaper	academic
If I were	698	611	335	327	97
If he were	229	276	87	105	39
If she were	64	247	36	41	12
If it were	429	538	288	276	179
Total	1420	1672	746	749	327
Per mil	12.17	14.96	6.35	6.63	2.94

Again, "*if I/he/she/it were*" idiomatic expressions are used more frequently in *fiction* sub-section of COCA (**14.96 PM**) as in *fiction* genre in BNC (**17.8 PM**). In addition, the least usage frequency is found in *academic* sub-section of COCA (**2.94 PM**) (Table 7). Moreover, Table 8 shows the difference of use of *if*- idiomatic expressions in written and spoken sub-corpora of COCA and BNC. It also shows that using those expressions is a feature of written British English, whereas their use is a characteristic of spoken American English.

Table 8. Frequency of subjunctive conditionals in spoken and written sub-corpora of COCA and BNC

COCA		BNC	
spoken	written	spoken	written
12.17 PM	7.7 PM	4.2 PM	7.21 PM

2.1. Collocates with subjunctive conditionals:

Table 9 shows that "*if I were*" is the most noticeable idiomatic expression collocating with the pronoun "*you*" in both COCA and BNC, 185 and 45 times respectively. Table 10 shows some concordance lines for *if I were you* from COCA and BNC. Further, the most frequent adjective occurred with "*if he were*" is *alive* which was used 28 times, and the adverb *herewhich* was used 33 times with "*if he were*" in COCA.

Table 9. Pronouns collocate with "*if I were*" in COCA and BNC

	COCA	BNC
If I were you	185	48
If I were him	20	1
If I were her	10	0
If I were them	8	2
If I were he	5	3
If I were they	1	0
Total	229	54

Table 10. Concordance lines of idiomatic subjunctive *If I were you* in COCA and BNC

Concordance lines in COCA	Concordance lines in BNC
I would -- wouldn't buy any thirty-year bonds , if I were you.	I should make it if I were you.
I wouldn't call her a vessel to her face, if I were you.	I wouldn't touch that if I were you
I would listen to the witch, young man, if I were you.	You should stay lying down if I were you.
I'd try eBay , if I were you	If I were you I'd much rather be with Michelle and Mutty.
I'd stick with the stained one you're wearing , if I were you	If I were you I'd probably be er you know looking around a bit.

However, numbers showed no significance in BNC, since they occurred less than 5 times. *If she were anyone /mine/ me/ him* accounted for 5 occurrences in COCA and 2 occurrences in BNC. Further, *if he were anyone/ her/ someone/somebody/ mine* occurred 6 times in COCA and once in BNC. Interestingly, *If it were me/ anyone/anybody/anything / nothing/ somebody/something/ she/you/ mine/yours/ her/I/ it* accounted for 65 occurrences in COCA and 9 occurrences in BNC.

The results are compatible with De Beaugrande (2001) who conducted a corpus-based study comparing between "*if I was*" and "*if I were*" in the *Bank of English*. The researcher found out that '*if I were*' was used in

2061 lines, whereas '*if I was*' was used 2876 times. Then, De Beaugrande analyzed 10% of those concordance lines to test whether there are collocational patterns which occur with the aforementioned idiomatic expressions (*if I were and if I was*), specifically with pronouns. Interestingly, he found out that "*if I were*" collocated with the pronoun "*You*" 282 times while "*if I was*" was followed by the same pronoun 37 times only. Table 11 shows the pronoun patterns following "*if I were*" and "*if I was*" in the *Bank of English*.

Table 11. Frequencies of pronouns occurrences after "*if I were*" and "*if I was*" (adopted from De Beaugrande: 2001)

	Raw frequency		Raw frequency		Raw frequency
If I was he	0	If I was she	2	If I was they	0
If I was him	17	If I was her	5	If I was them	11
If I were he	3	If I were she	0	If I were they	1
If I were him	18	If I were her	6	If I were them	10

Moreover, it was suggested that EFL textbooks recommend using "*if I were*' + *Subject Pronoun*", however, such rule is not supported by corpus evidence, i.e., the subjunctive *were* and indicative *was* (*if I were and if I was*) collocate or co-occur with the object pronouns more often than subject pronouns.

Phoocharoensil (2014) who conducted a corpus-based study on if-conditional in American spoken English, stated that linguistically it appears to be "a rule that *were*, no matter what the subject is, is the preferable and correct form of *be* in the if-clause of Type II" (2014:70), yet he found out that American speakers used *was* (18 tokens) over *were* (12 tokens) in the second conditional. Thus, the grammatical rule is violated due to the fact that native speakers of American English show a tendency not to strict themselves to the if-conditional convention.

The first corpus-based investigation of *were*-subjunctives in British English and American English was introduced by Johansson and Norheim (1988), who found that the subjunctive verb-forms were preferred to the indicative in hypothetical conditionals. In terms of frequency, the *were*-subjunctive was more frequent in Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus (LOB), whereas using indicative *was* had a relatively higher relative frequency than *were*-subjunctive in American English.

Table 12. Subjunctive *were* and indicative *was* in hypothetical CS construction by Johansson and Norheim (1988) (adapted from Leech et al 2009)

	LOB were: was	F-LOB were: was	Brown were: was	Frown were: was
As if	33:15	19:19	35:8	32:8
As though	22:9	13:9	19:1	9:3
Even if	7:10	2:6	3:4	4:4
if	64:38	46:40	56:28	53:20
Total	126:72	80:74	113:41	98:20

In her corpus- based study, Peters (1998) provided evidence from the Australian Corpus of English (compiled in the mid1980s) that there might be a shift away from the use of *were* subjunctives, in favor of indicative *was*. She concluded that the use of *were*-subjunctive is fixed into a formulaic usage "*if x were*".

Leech, Hundt, Mair and Smith (2009) investigated the use of subjunctive *were* , indicative *was* and mandative subjunctive, using Word Smith software tools, they searched for the conditional subordinating conjunctions *as if*, *as though*, *even if* and *if* followed either by *were(n't)* or *was(n't)*, with a span up to seven words to the right of the conjunction. After that, concordancers were manually edited to keep the target search queries (mandative and were subjunctives). Therefore, the researchers took out all plural subjects and singular *you*, Clauses with collective nouns and ambiguous subjects were not included in the final dataset either. Moreover, the researchers excluded instances where *if* was used in the sense of 'whether'. The results showed that *subjunctive were* was dominant comparing to *mandative subjunctive* in the target corpora from the 1960s through 1990s: LOB, the Freiburg-LOB Corpus of British English (F-LOB), BROWN and FROWN as figure30 displays.

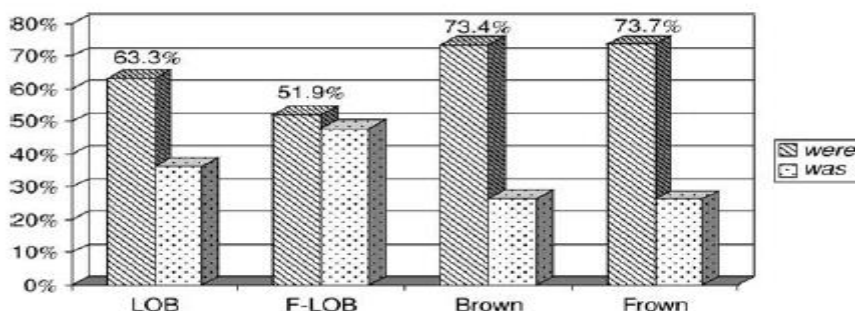


Figure1. Subjunctive *were* and indicative *was* in hypothetical conditional construction (adapted from Leech et al 2009, p. 64)

Novogradec (2009) conducted a corpus-based data, primarily based on TV scripts of the series *Friends* and a corpus from the British National Corpus (BNC). The results showed uses of *was* were higher than *were* in subjunctive conditionals. It should be noted that Novogradec analyzed spoken English, e.g. TV series, therefore, the occurrences of *was* in that context might not be generalized to written American English.

Conclusion:

The current study showed that *if* and *unless* are more commonly used in written texts of BNC, whereas they are more commonly employed in the spoken section COCA. Reviewing the literature revealed that there is not research related to the issues of differences and similarities between the use of CS constructions or CCs in British and American English. Another conclusion is that all CCs are utilized more frequently by British users than Americans in spoken and written forms.

Results related to *provided that* and *on condition that* suggest that they are an aspect of formal written language in both American and British English (they are used generally in legal contracts and license agreements). However, both CCs are employed more by British users than Americans. Again, reviewing the literature revealed no studies were conducted on the analysis of *provided that* and *on condition that*.

Another interesting finding related to cross-sectional distribution of CCs (in written contexts), revealed that *if* and *unless* are more frequently used in journalistic texts in American English and least in academic contexts, contrary to their use in British English, and that *if* and *unless* are more frequently used in academic writings and least in journalistic texts. Again, no literature related to cross-distributional use of CCs in English different varieties was found. Finally, the idiomatic use of subjunctive conditionals (*if I/ she/he/it were*) is a characteristic of written British English, whereas it is a feature of spoken American English.

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