Understanding Semantic Taxonomy and Syntactic Realization of Conditional in French

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[Abstract : Conditional is one of the most difficult grammatical structures for the learners of French as a foreign language. The difficulty arises from the complexity inherent in the form and function of the conditionals. As a linguistic and cognitive complex structure, the conditional in French can take different forms and thereby can express a plethora of meanings. The purpose of this paper is to describe and illustrate different forms and functions of conditionals in French so that the learners of French as a foreign language can overcome the existing challenges of mastering a sound command over conditional.]

Introduction

Conditional is one of the most difficult grammatical structures for the learners of French as a foreign language. The difficulty arises from the complexity inherent in the form and function of the conditionals. As a linguistic and cognitive complex structure, the conditional in French can take different forms and thereby can express a plethora of meanings. According to Traugott (2009) cited in Abdollahi-Guilani et al. (2019), understanding of the conceptual and behavioral organization involved in the construction and interpretation of these kinds of sentences provides fundamental insights into the inferential strategies and the cognitive and linguistic processes of human beings. The purpose of this paper is to describe and illustrate different forms and functions of conditionals in French so that the learners of French as a foreign language can overcome the existing challenges of mastering a sound command over conditional. This is a descriptive research. Data have been collected through document analysis. A good number of existing literature which includes referred journals, text books and grammar books have been consulted for data collection.

Definition of conditional

The meaning of conditional can vary from language to language and structure to structure. Every language has a theory of forming conditional sentences (Traugott et al. 1986). These conditionals are expressed in various ways which differ from language to language (Sultan, 2011, Cited in Gardner et al. 2017).

Conditional in French conveys different meanings such as the sense of possibility, wish or regret and volition. In addition, conditionals convey cognitive

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reasoning and semantic nuances through factual, nonfactual or hypothetical events. Moreover, conditional sentences can be used to soften the force of suggestion or command. Conditional, according to Moulton (1942), is a misnomer conditional can be used in French both as a tense and as a mood. As a tense, the conditional (*le conditionnel)* expresses the future seen from a past point of view. As a mood, the conditional allows us to talk about a hypothetical or imagined reality that can only occur under certain circumstances.

Conditional in French can be expressed either in a simple sentence with the conditional form of the verb or in a complex sentence with si-clause (If clause). According to Schulz (2014), a conditional sentence is "a sentence that consists of a main or matrix sentence, called the consequent, and a subordinate sentence starting with if, called the antecedent." The main structure of conditionals contains a "protasis" (an antecedent clause) and an "apodosis" (a consequent clause) (Zhang, 2005; Polanska, 2006).

Direct conditions, which constitute the central use of conditionals, "convey that the situation in the matrix clause is directly contingent on that of the conditional clause i.e. the truth of the proposition in the matrix clause is a consequence of the fulfillment of the condition in the conditional clause" (Quirk, 1985 : 1088 cited in Raguseo, 2013).

Semantic versus syntactic approach

Conditional sentences are complex structures from both syntactic and semantic point of view. Conditionals have been generally taught from the point of view of form. This point of view is both incomplete and inappropriate to capture the subtle differences in meaning as it fails to reflect the wide variety of meaning it conveys as well as the inherent complexity of structures learners of French as a foreign language might encounter in authentic materials and situations in the target language.

Several researchers have talked about the semantic relationship of conditionals in different ways. For example, while Guilani et al (1999) and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) claims that conditionals can refer to three kinds of semantic relationship i.e. factual, future or predictive and imaginative conditionals, Yule (1998) and Wu (2012) says that conditionals consist of four types of semantic relationship : factual, predictive, hypothetical, and counterfactual. According to Abdollahi-Guilani et al (2019), conditionals can express three types of semantic relationships : (1) factual, (2) future or predictive and (3) imaginative. Each type of conditionals is subdivided into several subsets : Generic (the relationship which is true and unchanging), Habitual (similar to the generic condition except for the type of relationship relies upon habits, Implicit inference (An inference is indirectly made about specific time-bound relationships), Explicit inference (In explicit inference conditionals, neither of the clauses has parallel tenses and aspects.)

The use of conditional in French

Conditional in French is used in a plethora of situations. The most common situations are listed below.

a) To express a condition in the conditional sentences i.e. in the si-clause (if-clause).
   Example : Si j'avais le temps, je lirais une bibliothèque entière!
   Transcription : [si] [jave] [lə] [tɑ̃] [ʒə] [liʁɛ] [yn] [biblijɔtɛk] [ɑ̃tjɛʁ]
   Translation : If I had time, I would an entire library.

b) To express something politely especially in making a request or asking for something.
   Example : Pourrais-tu fermer la fenêtre s'il te plaît?
   Transcription : [puʁɛty] [fɛʁme] [la] [f(ə)nɛtʁ] [sil] [tə] [plɛ]
   Translation : Could you please close the window?

c) To convey a desire.
   Example : J'aimerais tellement que tu viennes chez moi.
   Transciption : [ʒɛməʁɛ] [tɛlmɑ̃] [kə] [ty] [vien] [ʃe] [mwa]
   Translation : I highly want that you come to my house.

d) To express a hypothesis.
   Example : Les pertes s'élèveraient à des milliards d'euros.
   Transcription : [le] [pɛʁt] [sel(ə)vʁɛ] [a] [de] [miljaʁ] [døʁo]
   Translation : The loss could mount to billions of dollars.

e) To express a future action mentioned in the indirect speech.
   Example : Il annonça que lorsque le vent s'élèverait, son bateau repartirait pour de bon.
   Transcription : [il] [anɔ̃sa] [kə] [lɔʁskə] [lə] [vɑ̃] [sel(ə)vʁɛ] [sɔ̃] [bato] [ʁ(ə)paʁtiʁɛ] [puʁ] [də] [bɔ̃]
   Translation : He annouced that when the wind picked up, his boat would set off for good.

f) To express an imaginative situation.
   Example : Toi, tu serais le cow-boy et, moi, je serais l'Indien.
   Transcription : [twa] [ty] [səʁɛ] [lə] [kaʊˌbɔɪ] [e] [mwa] [ʒə] [səʁɛ] [lɛ̃djɛ̃]
   Translation : You, you would be the cow-boy and I would be the Indian.

g) To express advice and suggestions.
   Example : Tu devrais aller chez le médecin.
   Transcription : [ty] [d(ə)vʁɛ] [ale] [ʃe] [lə] [med(ə)sɛ̃]
   Translation : You should go to the doctor's chamber.

h) To express reproach.
   Example : Tu pourrais arrêter de me faire des reproches!
   Transcription : [ty] [puʁɛ] [aʁete] [də] [mə] [fɛʁ] [de] [ʁ(ə)pʁɔʃ]
   Translation : You could stop blaming me.

i) To express regret.
Example : J'aurais aimé être un meilleur ami.
Transcription : [ʒɔʁɛ] [eme] [ɛtʁ] [ɶ̃] [mɛjœʁ] [ami]
Translation : I wish I had been a best friend.

j) To express a dream.
Example : J' aimerais devenir médecin.
Transcription : [ʒɛməʁɛ] [dəv(ə)niʁ] [med(ə)sɛ̃]
Translation : I would like to become a doctor.

k) To express the future from a past point of view.
Example : Elle pensait qu'elle pourrait partir en vacance.
Transcription : [Ɛl] [pɑ̃se] [kƐl] [puʁɛ] [paʁtiʁ] [ɑ̃] [vakɑ̃s]
Translation : She thought that, she could go on vacation.

l) To express a probability in the future.
Example : Elle viendra demain.Elle devrait arriver tôt.
Transcription : [Ɛl] [viɑ̃dʁa] [d(ə)mɛ̃] [Ɛl] [d(ə)vʁɛ] [aʁive] [to]
Translation : She will come tomorrow. She should arrive early.

m) To express an eventuality or possibility.
Example : Tu serais capable de diriger une équipe?
Transcription : [ty] [səʁɛ] [kapabl] [də] [diʁiʒe] [yn] [ekip]
Translation : Would you able to lead a team?

n) To express an information without certainty.
Example : Il se pourrait qu'il vienne demain.
Transcription : [il] [sə] [puʁɛ] [kil] [vien] [d(ə)mɛ̃]
Translation : He might come tomorrow.

o) To express a possible action or condition in the present. It is often used with exclamation or questions.
Example : Quelle heure serait-il? Il serait trois heures.
Transcription : [kel] [œʁ] [səʁɛtil] [il] [səʁɛ] [tʁwɑ] [zœʁ]
Translation : What time it could be? It could be three o'clock already.

p) Used by journalists and reporters to describe an action that is unsure or not known to be true.
Example : Il serait à Dhaka aujourd'hui.
Transcription : [il] [səʁɛ] [a] [daka] [oʒuʁdɥi].
Trasnlation : He might be in Dhaka today.

q) To describe an action that would happen in certain circumstances. In such situation the term"would" used before the main verb.
Example : Dans ce cas là, je partirais.
Transcription : [dɑ̃] [sə] [kɑ] [la] [ʒə] [paʁtiʁɛ]
Translation : In that case I would leave.

r) Used after certain conjunction such as quand, lorsque, au moment où, dès que, aussitôt que, tant que, pendant que, tandis quewhen the main verb is in conditional.
Example : Il lirait le livre quand il aurait le temps.
Transcription : [il] [liʁɛ] [lə] [livʁ] [kɑ̃] [til] [ɔʁɛ] [lə] [tɑ̃]
Translation : He would read the book when he had time.

s) Alsolso used after au cas où. In such situation, the main verb can be in any tense.
Example : J'attendrai encore une heure au cas où il viendrait.
Transcription : [ʒatɑ̃dʁɛ] [ɑ̃kɔʁ] [yn] [œʁ] [o] [ka] [u] [il] [viɑ̃dʁe]
Translation : I shall wait another hour in case he comes.

Types of conditional form of French verbs

Understanding how to conjugate French verbs into conditional form is one of the most effective initial steps to approach the conditional in French. The conditional form of French verbs can be mainly classified into two types: a) Present conditional, b) Past conditional. Again past conditional can take two distinct forms. Hence, French conditional verbs can take three different forms in total :

i) Present conditional form
ii) Past conditional first form
iii) Past conditional second form

The conjugation of the French verb "Parler" (To speak) shown in the following table illustrates three different types of conditional form of verb in French :

Present Conditional	**Past Conditional**	
	Past Conditional first form	**Past Conditional Second Form**
Je parlerais	J'aurais parlé	J'eusse parlé
Tu parlerais	Tu aurais parlé	Tu eussesparlé
Il, elle, on parlerait	Il, elle, on aurait parlé	Il, elle, on eût parlé
Nous parlerions	Nous aurions parlé	Nous eussions parlé
Vous parleriez	Vous auriez parlé	Vous eussiez parlé
Ils/elles parleraient	Ils/elles auraient parlé	Ils/elles eussentparlé

Table 1 : Present conditional and past conditional forms of verb "Parler"

Conjugation of French verbs in Present conditional

The present conditional is formed by adding the ending of imperfect tense (L'imparfait) i.e. ais, ais, ait, ions, iez, and aient to the stem of the future indefinite form. It is important to remember that the stem of the first group and second group verbs is similar to the base form of the concerned verb. However, since the verbs of

the third group are irregular, their stems undergo slight changes orthographically. The following table illustrates the orthographic changes of the three different group of French verbs.

Conjugation of first group of verbs	**Conjugation of second group of verbs**	**Conjugation of third groups of verbs**		
Danser [dɑ̃se] (Todance)	**Finir[finiʁ] (To finish)**	**Répondre [ʁepɔ̃dʁ] (To respond)**	**Être [ɛtʁ] (To be)**	**Avoir [avwaʁ] (To have)**
Je danserais	Je finirais	Je répondrais	Je serais	J'aurais
Tu danserais	Tu finirais	Tu répondrais	Tu serais	Tu auras
Il, Elle, On danserait	Il, Elle, On finirait	Il, Elle, On répondrait	Il, elle, on serait	Il, elle, on aura
Nous danserions	Nous finirions	Nous répondrions	Nous serions	Vous auriez
Vous danseriez	Vous finiriez	Vous répondriez	Vous series	Nous aurions
Ils, elles danseraient	Ils, elles finiraient	Ils, elles, répondraient	Ils,elles seraient	Ils, elles auraient

Table 2 : Conjugation of three groups of French verbs in present conditional form

Several French verbs have irregular roots in the future simple tense. The same irregular roots are used for forming conditional form.Some examples are given below.

Infinitive/base form of verbs	**Irregular Root**	**Infinitive/base form of verbs**	**Irregular Root**
Aller [ale] (To go)	Ir-	Avoir [avwaʁ] (To have)	Aur-
Devoir [d(ə)vwaʁ] (To have to)	Devr-	Être [ɛtʁ] (To be)	Ser-
Faire [fɛʁ] (To do)	Fer-	Falloir [falwaʁ] (To be needed)	Faudr-
Pleuvoir [pløvwaʁ] (To rain)	Pleuvr-	Pouvoir [puvwaʁ] (To have ability)	Pourr-
Savoir [savwaʁ] (To know)	Saur-	Valoir [valwaʁ] (To be worth)	Vaudr-
Venir [v(ə)niʁ] (To come)	Viendr-	Voir [vwaʁ] (To see)	Ver-
Vouloir [vulwaʁ] (To wish)	Voudr-		

Table 3 : Irregular root of most common French irregular verbs

However, there are a good number of French verbs which undergo several other internal changes when conjugated into present conditional form.

1. Verbs such as employer, ennuyer, envoyer, essayer, nettoyer, payer etc whose infinitive forms end in –oyer, -uyer and –ayer change –y- to –i- when conjugated into Present conditional.

Envoyer [ɑ̃vwaje]	**To send**
J'envoierais	I would send
Tu envoierais	You would send
Il, Elle, On envoierait	He, she, we would send)
Nous envoierions	We would send
Vous envoieriez	You would send
Ils, Elles envoiraient	They would send

2. When appeler and jeter verbs are conjugated into condiotional form, the last consonant letter is doubled.

Appeler [ap(ə)le]	**To call**
J'appellerais	I would call
Tu appellerais	You would call
Il, elle, on appellerait	He, she, we would call
Nous appellerions	We would call
Vous appelleriez	You would call
Ils, elles appelleraient	They would call

3. Verbs such as courir, parcourir, secourir, sourire, mourir etc which end with –rir or –rire drop the –ir or-ire and the first –r- is doubled. For example :

Secourir [s(ə)kuʀiʀ]	**To help out/rescue**
Je secourrais	I would help/rescue
Tu secourrais	You would help/rescue
Il, elle, on secourrait	He, she, we would help/rescue
Nous secourrions	We would help/rescue
Vous secourriez	You would help/rescue
Ils, elles secourraient	They would help/rescue

4. Verbs such as *acheter*, *mener*, *amener*, *emmener*, *promener* etc which contain a –e- immediately before the last syllable of the infinitive form, the –e- changes into –è- when conjugated in the present conditional form. For example :

Promener [pʀɔm(ə)ne]	**To take a walk**
Je promènerais	I would take a walk
Tu promènerais	You would take a walk
Il, elle, on promènerait	He, she, we would take a walk
Nous promènerions	We would take a walk
Vous promèneriez	You would take a walk
Ils, elles promèneraient	They would take a walk

Conjugation of the French verbs in past conditional form

Past conditional (Le conditionnel passé) corresponds to the English structure *would have + past participle*. These structure is used to look back on past situations and express alternative outcomes. To conjugate the past conditional (le conditionnel passé), we use the conditional form of avoir/être followed by the participe passé of the verb. As mentioned earlier, Past conditional in French has two forms :

I. Past Conditional first form
II. Past conditional second form.

The past conditional first form is formed by adding past participle form of the verb after the present conditional form of the verb être or avoir. The auxiliary verb *être* is used with reflexive verbs and with the 14 movement verbs i.e. *naître, mourir, aller, venir, montrer, descendre, arriver, partir, entrer, sortir, rester, retourner, tomber,* and *rentrer* and their related forms such as *revenir, remonter, redescendre, repartir* etc.

The second form of past conditional is formed by adding past participle form of the verb after the imperfect subjunctive form of the verb *être* or *avoir*. This form is used in standard language and is usually found in literature. The imperfect subjunctive form of the auxiliary verb *être* is used with reflexive verbs and with the 14 movement verbs. The following table illustrates the conjugation of past conditional first form and past conditional second form.

Past Conditional First Form	**Past Conditional Second Form**
Chercher [ʃɛʀʃe] (To search)	Chercher [ʃɛʀʃe] (To search)
J'aurais cherché (I would have searched)	J'eusse cherché (I would have searched)
Tu aurais cherché (You would have searched)	Tu eusses cherché (You would have searched)
Il, elle, on aurait cherché (He, she, we would have searched)	Il, elle, on eût cherché (He, she, we would have searched)
Nous aurions cherché (We would have searched)	Nous eussions cherché (We would have searched)
Vous auriez cherché (You would have searched)	Vous eussiez cherché (You would have searched)
Ils, elles auraient cherché (They would have searched)	Ils, elles eussent cherché (They would have searched)

Si Clauses

The conditional mood is generally taught by exploring *si clauses* (if clauses) first. Similar to English, there are three *si* clauses in French. All types of conditional sentences containing a si-clause have two parts : A *"protasis"* (condition clause)

and a apodosis (a result or main clause). Only four tenses of the indicative mood may normally be used in the *si* clause in French. These four tenses are the present tense, the present perfect tense (*passé compose),* the past progressive tense (imparfait), and the *plus- que- parfait.* The tense used in the main clause is the same in both French and English. In a conditional sentence, *si* is equivalent to "if" in English.

Si-clauses (condition clause) in French are used to express two types of conditions : real condition and unreal/counterfactual condition
Real conditions

A condition that describes what is possible or likely to happen in the present or past is called a "real" condition. The following sentence exemplifies a real condition.

Example : Si tu me téléphones, je te parlerai.
Transcription : [si] [ty] [mə] [telefɔn] [ʒə] [tə] [paʀleʀe]
Translation : If you call me, I shall speak to you.

The subordinate clause of the abovementioned sentence is a condition clause. Here, the condition is "*Si tu me téléphones"*(if you call me). The main clause of the condition expresses that the result of the condition "*je te parlerai" (*I shall speak to you)is very likely to happen.

The sequence of tenses used for a real condition is shown in the following table.

Type of Condition	**Tense used in the si-clause**	**Tense/mood used in the main clause**
a) A real possibility in the present or future	Present	Present, Future, or imperative mood
b) A real possibility in the past	Passé compose	The same tense one would use in English

As it is evident from the table, a present tense or a *passé composé* must be used in the condition clause (si-clause) to express a real condition. So the condition clause for *expressing* a real condition will have any of the following two forms : a) si+ present simple, or b) si+ *passé composé.*

a) **Si followed by simple present**

Example : Si j'ai soif, je bois de l'eau.
Transcription : [si] [ʒe] [swaf] [ʒə] [bwa] [də] [lo]
Translation : If I'm thirsty, I drink water.

b) Si followed by passé composé

Example : Si j'ai bien compris, elle a changé d'avis.
Transcription : [si] [ʒe] [bjɛ̃] [kəm prī] [ɛl] [a] [ʃɑ̃ʒe] [davi]
Translation : If I understood correctly, she changed her mind.

It is also very important to note that either clause may begin the sentence.If the sentence begins with a conditional clause, then a comma must be put between the condition clause and the subordinate clause. However, if the sentence begins with the main clause there is no need to use a comma. Example :

a) Tu réussiras si tu étudies beaucoup.
Transcription : [ty] [ʀeysiʀa] [si] [ty] [etydi] [boku]
Translation : You will succeed if you study a lot.

b) Si tu étudies beaucoup, tu réussiras.
Transcription : [si] [ty] [etydi] [boku] [ty] [ʀeysiʀa]
Translation : If you study well, you will succeed.

Unreal condition/Counter Factual Conditions

A conditional sentence that describes a situation or event that is unlikely to happen is called "contrary- to- fact" or "unreal". For example :

Example : S'il pleuvait, je ne sortirais pas.
Transcription : [sil] [*pløve] [ʒə] [nə] [sɔʀtiʀe] [pa]*
Translation : (If it rained, I wouldn't go out.)

The abovementioned example shows that the action did not occur because the condition mentioned in the conditional clause did not happen.

The sequence of tenses for an unreal/ a contrary- to- fact condition is shown in the following table :

Condition	**Tense used in the si-clause**	**Tense/mood in the main clause**
a) Unrealized, unreal, contrary-to-fact or unlikely in the present or future	Imparfait	Generally the conditional or may be the same as in English
b) Unrealized, unreal, contrary –to-fact, or unlikely in the past	Plus-que parfait	The same tense one would use in English

The table illustrates that in order to express an unreal/a counter-factual condition, a past progressive or a past perfect tense must be used in the condition clause (si-clause). So the condition clause for expressing an unreal condition will have any of the following two forms : si + imparfait, or si + *plus que parfait*.

i) Si + imparfait

Example : Si j'étais riche, je m'achèterais une nouvelle maison.
Transcription : [si] [ʒete] [ʀiʃ] [ʒə] [maʃ(ə)teʀe] [yn] [nuvɛl] [mɛzɔ̃]
Translation : If I were rich, I would buy myself a new house.

ii) Si+ plus que parfait

Example : Je serais venu *à* la gare, si j'avais su que tu venais.
Transcription : [ʒə] [səʁɛ] [v(ə)ny] [a] [la] [gaʁ] [si] [ʒave] [sy] [kə] [ty] [v(ə)nɛ]
Translation : I would have come to the station if I had known you were coming.

Based on whether the conditional sentence express likely, unlikely, or impossible, si-clauses are divided into three types

a) First conditional sentence : To express likely condition.
b) Second conditional sentence : To express unlikely condition
c) Third conditional sentence : To express impossible condition

First Conditional

The first conditional expresses that certain actions will take place in the future on the condition that an event occur in the present. The first *si* clause doesn't actually use the conditional mood at all, so the learners do not need to learn the conditional forms of French verbs. The structure of first conditional is *Si+ present/present perfect, present future or imperative mood*.

Example : Si j'ai le temps, je t'appellerai.
Transcription : [si] [ʒe] [lə] [tɑ̃] [ʒe] [tap(ə)leʁe]
Translation : If I have time, I'll call you.

Second conditional

The second conditional expresses an unlikely situation. It implies that certain action is possible but not likely to happen. The second *si* clause in French is constructed using the following structure : Si + imparfait (present progressive, present conditional.

Example : Si j'avais le temps, je t'appellerais.
Transcription : [si] [ʒave] [lə] [tɑ̃] [ʒe] [tap(ə)leʁɛ]
Translation : If I had time, I would call you.

Third conditional

This *si* clause expresses a certain amount of regret. It expresses the same idea that "should have" or "could have" convey in English. Like the *plus-que-parfait*, the past conditional is made up of the conditional of the auxiliary verb *être* or *avoir* and the past participle of the lexical verb. The structure of the third *si* clause in French is as follows : Si + Pluperfect, Past Conditional.

Example : Si j'avais eu le temps, je t'aurais appelé.
Transcription : [si] [ʒave] [o] [lə] [tɑ̃] [ʒe] [tɔʁe] [ap(ə)le]
Translation : If I had had time, I would have called you.

Negation in the Conditional

To negate an affirmative conditional sentences, ne(n') is used before the conditional verb and *pas* is used after the conditional verb.

Example : Je ne chanterais pas la chanson.
Translation : [ʒə] [nə] [ʃɑ̃teʁɛ] [pɑ] [la] [ʃɑ̃sɔ̃]
Transcription : I would not sing.

To negate an inverted question, *ne* and *pas* are put around the inverted form. It is important to note that all object and adverbial pronouns must remain before the conjugated form of the verb.

Example : Ne la consulterait- il pas?
Translation : [nə] [la] [kɔ̃syltɛʁɛtil] [pɑ]
Transcription : Wouldn't he consult her?

In negative sentences, the past participle comes after the second part of the negation *(pas)*.

Example : Je ne serais pas venu.
Transcription : [ʒə] [nə] [səʁɛ] [pɑ] [v(ə)ny]
Translation : I would not come.

To negate a sentence in the past conditional (*conditionnel passé*), simply put *ne* and the negative word around the conjugated helping verb. In case of reflexive verbs, the reflexive pronoun and the auxiliary verb are put between the two parts of the the negation i.e. ne…pas/jamais etc.

Example : Il ne les aurait jamais achetées ces livres.
Transcription : [il] [nə] [le] [zɔʁɛ] [ʒamɛ] [aʃ(ə)te] [se] [livʁ]
Translation : He never would have bought these books.

Questions in the conditional

To form a question using inversion, the order of the subject pronoun and the verb is reversed and joined with a hyphen

Example : *Travaillerais- tu en France?*
Transcription : [tʁavajeʁɛty] [ã] [fʁɑ̃s]
Translation : Would you work in France?

To negate an inverted question, *ne* and related the negative expressions i.e. *pas, jamais, personne* etc are used around the inverted form. It should be remembered that all object and adverbial pronouns must remain before the conjugated form of the verb.

Example : Ne travaillerais- tu pas en France?
Transcription : [nə] [tʁavajeʁɛty] [pɑ] [zã] [fʁɑ̃s]
Translation : Wouldn't you work in France?

Agreement of the participe passé in conditional sentence

The past pasrticple (*participe passé) of* certain verbs in French must agree in gender and number. For verbs constructed with *être*, the participle agrees in gender and number with the subject of the sentence.

Example : Il serait parti en voyage.
Transcription : [il] [səʁɛ] [paʁti] [ã] [vwajaʒ]
Transcription : [ɛl] [səʁɛ] [paʁti] [ã] [vwajaʒ]
Example : Elles seraient parties en voyage.

Translation : He would have gone on a trip.
Translation : They would have gone on a trip.

For verbs that are constructed using *avoir*, the past participle form agrees in gender and number with a direct object that comes before the verb. This direct object can take three possible forms : a personal pronoun *(me, te, le, la, nous, vous, les)*, the relative pronoun *que*, or a noun that comes before the verb (in questions and exclamations).

Examples : a) Il l'aurait interrogé.
Transcription : [il] [lɔʀɛ] [ẽtɛʀɔʒe]
Translation : He interrogated him.(Masculine gender singular number)

b) Il les aurait interrogées.
Transcription : [il] [le] [zɔʀɛ] [ẽtɛʀɔʒe]
Translation : He interrogated them. (Feminine gender plural number)

In the case of reflexive verbs (which always take *être* as their auxiliary in the *conditionnel passé*), the past participle form generally agrees with the subject.*For example :*Nous nous serions levés trop tard. (We would have got up too late). The exception to this rule concerns direct objects i.e. the participle does not agree if the reflexive verb is followed by a direct object.

Example : Elle se serait lavé les mains.
Transcription : [ɛl] [sə] [səʁɛ] [lave] [le] [mẽ]
Translation : She would have washed her hands
but: Elle se serait lavée.
Transcription : [ɛl] [sə] [səʁɛ] [lave]
Translation : She would have washed herself

Common mistakes in using Conditional in French

The conditional seems apparently quite simple but there are a few common mistakes which not only the foreign learners but also the native speakers often commit while using the conditional. One of the most common mistakes made is the overuse of the politeness aspect of the conditional. Some learners assume that because the conditional makes a sentence more polite, using conditional form of all verbs will make the sentences more polite. Unfortunately this is not the case. The politeness aspect of the conditional should be used only with verbs expressing desire, like *vouloir***,** *aimer***,** *and désirer* or with verbs that incite action from the other person—like *pouvoir* or *devoir***.**

Another mistake that is very commonly committed by French speaking people is using the conditional on both sides of the *si* clause. For example : *Si j'aurais su, je l'aurais fait.* (If I would have known, I would have done it.). This sentence is grammatically incorrect. The correct sentence construction would be : "*Si j'avais su, je l'aurais fait*." (If I had known, I would have done it.) The ground ruleis that one should never use the conditional form of the verb immediately after *si*in the conditional clause.

Why difficult for French as a Foreign Language Speakers

The learners of French as Foreign Language face several difficulties in understanding the form of French conditional as well as the meaning expressed by these forms. First of all, the term "le conditionnel" (conditional) in French can be misleading because all conditional sentences do not always include a verb in the conditional form. This is because the term 'conditional' do not refer to the mood of the verb. Rather, it refers to the fact that each conditional sentence includes a condition in the subordinate clause and the fulfillment of the result expressed in the main depends on this condition expressed in the subordinate clause.

Secondly, the conditional form is used to express the fact that the occurrence of a certain event is dependent on the fulfillment of a certain condition. In English, modal verbs like "would" and "could" are used in such case, In French, one needs to use a whole new form of conjugation to evoke the same meaning. This is one of the reasons that the conditional can seem very challenging to the foreign learners.

Thirdly, learners of French as a foreign language encounter a big obstacle in acquiring conditionals because of the different possible meanings expressed through conditional sentences, such as cognitive reasoning, counterfactual, possible and impossible, real and unreal, and hypothetical. More specifically, forms, meanings and time-tense relationships cause the major difficulties in conditional sentences (Nekoueizadeh and Bahrani 2013 cited in Gardner 2017). For example, the people who speaks English either as first language or as a second language, cannot differentiate the subtle differences between the uses of senses of the English word "would". The word "would" is used in English to refer to the same sense expressed by both imparfait and present conditional in French. For example : *J'irais à Dhaka.* (I would go to Dhaka.) *J'allais fréquemment à Dhaka*. (I would [used to] go to Dhaka frequently.) There is a difference between "would" as used to form the conditional and the verb *vouloir* in the imperfect or in the *passé composé* to express "would" in the sense of "to be willing" : *Sous ces conditions, il signerait le contrat.* (Under those conditions, he would sign the contract.) *Il ne voulait pas signer le contrat* or *Il n'a pas voulu signer le contrat.* (He wouldn't [wasn't willing to] sign the contract.)

There is also another difficulty rising from the use of could to refer to the sense expressed by both conditional and imparfait form of *pouvoir* verb. The conditional form of the verb pouvoir is used to mean "should be able to" but the imparfait form of the verb pouvoir is used to mean "was able to". However, only "could" isused in English to refer to the same sense. For example : *Il pourrait gagner*. (He could win.). *Il ne pouvait pas gagner* or *Il n'a pas pu gagner.* (He could not win.)

Is French conditional a Mood or a tense?

There is a controversy among the grammarian and the linguists regarding the status of conditional in French. Many claim that conditional is not actually a tense. They opine that the conditional in French is a mood. They think that the French conditional is erroneously referred to as a tense. According to them, conditional is somewhat of a misnomer. Like the indicative and the imperative mood, the conditional is a mood. Moods, unlike tenses, describe how an action takes place, not when. Conjugated verbs have a mood and a tense, and because the conditional can be conjugated in the past, it's a mood, not a tense. Most tenses are first learned in the indicative mood; then other moods such as the conditional, the imperative and the subjunctive are learned.

While others say that the conditional in French is a tense. For example, Grevisse et al. (2016) mentioned that the conditional in French was considered as a mood earlier. But now a days it is no longer considered as a mood.

The controversy has evolved along with the gradual development of French Language. According to Dailey (1942), conditional was not known in Latin. It came into being in French during the emergence of French language from Vulgar Latin. Gradually it has overtaken the function of the both a tense and a mood. In addition, it sometimes replaces the imperfect subjunctive, which seems destined to disappear from French.

Moulton (1942) attempted to provide a sound explanation of this situation. He mentioned that "besides, the Grammar of the French Academy, which defines the conditional as a mood which indicates an action or a state whose completion depends on a condition. He also mentioned that the French Academy in its grammar book (p. 185) mentioned that "the conditional has sometimes the value of mood and sometimes the value of time. Moulton (1942) also raised several valid questions on the issue i.e. "But if the conditional has the value of a tense, to what mood does it then belong? If it is no longer conditional, is it indicative or subjunctive? Moulton concluded his opinion saying that conditional "is a tense of the indicative which has been substituted little by little for the subjunctive, in indirect discourse, in conditional sentences, and in all its so-called potential uses. It is constantly being used to replace the subjunctive."

Conclusion

Conditional is one of the most difficult grammatical components not only in French language but also in all other languages. Like English conditional, French conditional is both linguistically and cognitively intricate. The difficulty of conditional sentences arises from the complexity of two clauses in the conditional sentences, the dependence of the matrix clause on the realization of the condition clause, the myriad number of semantic meanings, forms of the verbs and syntactic realization. This is why many non-native speakers struggle a lot in understanding and producing effective conditional sentence.

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