

CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Conditional sentences consist of two parts: (I) a subordinate clause, the *protasis* (Greek for ‘proposition’ or ‘premiss’), which is introduced by *si* or *nisi* and contains the condition (M&F call this the ‘*if* clause’); and (II) a main clause, the *apodosis* (a ‘return’ or ‘result’), which expresses what is, was, will be, would be, would have been, etc. true if the *protasis* is, was, were, will be, etc. true (M&F call this the ‘*concluding* clause.’) There are three main types of conditional sentences (terminology varies from grammar to grammar).

I. OPEN CONDITIONS (M&F’s SIMPLE CONDITIONS). Condition expressed such that there is no implication as to its fulfilment.

a Present indicative in both clauses—translate as present indicative:

Si laboras, laeta es. If you work, you are happy.

Nisi laboras, laeta non es. If you do not work, you are not happy. (OR: You are not happy unless you work.)

b Past indicative (perfect or imperfect) in both clauses—translate as past indicative:

Si laborabas, laeta eras. If you were working, you were happy.

Si laboravisti, laeta fuisti. If you worked, you were happy. (OR: If you have worked, you have been happy.)

c Future or future perfect in *protasis*, future in *apodosis* (FUTURE-MORE-VIVID)—translate *protasis* as present, *apodosis* as future:

Si laborabis, laeta eris. If you work, you will be happy.

Si laboraueris, laeta eris. If you work, you will be happy.

d Mixed tenses, both indicative—construe as logic of construction demands.

II. FUTURE-LESS-VIVID (sometimes called IDEAL CONDITIONS). Condition expressed such that fulfilment is uncertain or dubious.

a Present subjunctive in both clauses—translate ‘If ... *should*, ... *would* ...’:

Si labores, laeta sis. If you should work, you would be happy.

III. CONTRARY-TO-FACT CONDITIONS (sometimes called UNREAL CONDITIONS). Condition expressed such that fulfilment is extremely doubtful or impossible (i.e., contrary to known facts).

a Imperfect subjunctive in both clauses; relates to *present* time or continuous action in the present—translate ‘If ... *were* (—ing), ... *would* ...’:

Si laborares, laeta esses. If you were working, you would be happy. (Implied: but you’re not working, so you’re not happy.)

b Pluperfect subjunctive in both clauses—translate ‘If ... *had* (—ed), ... *would have* ...’:

Si laboravisses, laeta fuisses. If you had worked, you would have been happy. (Implied: but you didn’t work, so you weren’t happy.)

c Pluperfect subjunctive in *protasis*, imperfect subjunctive in *apodosis*—translate ‘If ... *had* (—ed), ... *would (now)* ...’:

Si laboravisses, laeta esses. If you had worked, you would (now) be happy. (Implied: but you didn’t work, so you’re not happy.)