Form, Function and Notion:
Grammarians' Viewpoints of Mood

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I

Quirk *et al.* say that "the use of the modal verbs is one of the...
problematic areas of English grammar" (Quirk *et al.* 220).[1] Like-
wise, Fries writes: "In respect to the later developments of mean-
ing carried by [modal auxiliaries], the situation is exceedingly com-
plex and no rules yet formed seem adequate to mark out precisely
their areas of use" (Fries 175). Such viewpoints are not without
grounds, for, as Jespersen says, the mood represented by modal verbs
or auxiliaries expresses "certain attitudes of the mind of the speaker
towards the contents of the sentence" (*Philosophy* 313). Namely
the problem arises because of the mood having much to do with
the mental aspect of language.

The primary indicators of such "certain attitudes of the mind"
in the Proto-Indo-European languages were the inflectional catego-
ries such as the indicative, subjunctive, imperative, optative, and
injunctive. No problem may arise with the identification of the
mood as far as each is indicated conjugationally. But with respect
to such languages as English where inflection has been leveled or
lost as the result of "drift" depicted by Sapir,[2] the subject of the
modal category has been quite controversial. Jespersen, for ex-

ample, regards the mood as a syntactic category, not semantic, whereas Sonnenschein considers the opposite way. (This is touched on later.)

The problematic point of the mood is also mentioned by Leech as the following: "What makes it so difficult to account for the use of... 'modal auxiliaries' or 'modals'...is that their meaning has both a logical and a practical (or pragmatic) element" (Leech 66). The "logical element," for instance, means the necessity of his going in "He must go" or the certainty of its being true in "It must be true," while the "practical element" means the situation including not only the speaker but also the hearer or whatever else. For example, (1a) can be interpreted as the speaker's prediction (1b), or as the subject's will (1c):

(1)   a. He *will* not go there.

      b. =I predict his not going there.

      c. =He refuses to go there.

Similarly, the speaker's supposition is expressed in (2a), the speaker's permission to the subject in (2b), and the subject's ability in (2c):

(2)   a. He *can't* have done so.   (=It is impossible that he did so.)

      b. He *can* leave now if he wants to.   (=I give him permission to leave now if he wants to.)

      c. He *can* swim so fast.   (=He has the ability to swim so fast.)

As is understood from (1) and (2), the discourse point of view is indispensable to grasp modal expressions. As for the communica-

tive aspects of language use, M. A. K. Halliday advocates three linguistic functions as (3a, b, c):

(3)

	The sun will dry the cloth yellow.			
a. ideational	instr.	process	affected	result
b. interpersonal	modal		propositional	
c. textual	theme	rheme		

(Murata 7)

As in (3b), the interpersonal function includes the modal expression which is "a form of participation of the speaker in the speech event" (Halliday 335).
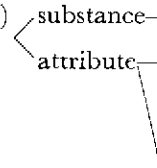
As Sawanobori states: "It is through modal expressions that the spirit of English, or subtle feelings, and psychology or intentions of those who use English can be comprehended" (Sawanobori 72), it might not be too much to say that the mood is so significant and implicative a category only for natives to be able to appreciate well.   It is therefore natural that the mood of such a character has been discussed various ways: syntactically, semantically, pragmatically, typologically, diachronically, and so forth.   One of them will be the discussion in terms of the three linguistic aspects: form, function, and notion[3] as in the traditional grammar.   How to treat them is a faithful reflection of grammarians' viewpoints as formalists or notionalists/functionalists.   In what follows the concern is with the grammatical viewpoints as seen in the discussions (made between them) about the mood in terms of form, function, and no-

tion rather than with the research on the mood itself.

II

Concerning the mood, Sweet, who is said to have defined grammar as "science of language," distinguishing it from the grammar as practical "art of language," and first put into the world the truly academic English grammar (Ishibashi *et al.* 28), says that the mood falls "under two main divisions [as fact-mood and thought-mood] ....[4] Whether such statements [as 'it is/is not true, I think so'] are really true...is no concern of *grammar, which deals only with the meaning of form itself*" (Sweet 106) [underline mine]. As shown in the underlined part, he sets a formal standard as a language analysis, which is clearly seen in his classification of parts of speech as in: (Sweet 38)

(4) a. declinable: noun-word, adjective-word, verb

  b. indeclinable (particles): adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection.[5]

Based on the formal criterion, Sweet does not regard as modal expressions those as not represented formally in the verb, saying of the grammatical category that "a group of grammatical forms expressing the same meaning—having the same functions—constitutes a grammatical category" (Sweet 10). Strictly speaking, according to his system, (5a, 6a) are different kinds of moods while (5b, 6b) are not the matter of moods:

(5) a. Wenn ich Zeit *hatte*, ging ich dorthin.

  b. Whenever I *had* time, I went there.

(6) a. Wenn ich Zeit *hätte*, würde ich gern dorthin gehen.

  b. If I *had* time, I would go there.

Similarly, in (7), except for (a), a particular mood is represented in specific forms of auxiliaries or verbs:

  (7) a. ...they think that they shall be heard....

       b. Hig wenað þær hi *sin* gehyrede.... (OE)

       c. ...qui...*exaudiantur*. (Latin)

       d. ...que piensan que...*serán* oidos.   (Spanish)

       e. Sie meinen, sie *könnten*...erreichen. (German) (Matt. vi. 7)

Sweet points out the essential aspect of language, saying: "language and grammar are concerned not with form and meaning separately, but with the connections between them" (Sweet 7).   And his standpoint is clearly shown in: "...the difference between *white* [in 'snow is white'] and...whiteness [in 'whiteness is an attribute of snow'] is purely formal and functional—grammatical, not logical" (Sweet 36); "white" is adjective and "whiteness" noun, so they are different in form and function, but not so in notion. By form are meant various forms such as /z, iz, s/, -en, -e- as plural, or /d, id, t/ as past tense; by function the relation shown by headword or modifier; and by notion (logical category in his terms) is meant anything concrete or abstract supposed to exist in this world, which he classifies as the following: (Sweet 12)

  (8)   substance—material thing: gold, house, etc.

        attribute—permanent: hardness, heavy, heavily, white, whiteness, etc.

        phenomenon: move, movement, thoughtful, thoughtfully, etc.

From his above-mentioned words: "grammar...deals only with the meaning of the form itself" and "formal and functional—grammatical," it can be said that Sweet is just a formalist from today's grammatical point of view, for his form all but corresponds to morphology and his function to syntax, both of which are taken as forms.

III

Jespersen, successor and improver of Sweet's ideas, says of the analysis or classification of word classes that "everything should be kept in view, form, function and meaning" and that "form...is the most obvious test" (*Philosophy* 60). His such a stance can be recognized in his classification of word classes: (*Philosophy* 91)

(9)   a. substantive   b. adjective   c. pronoun   d. verb

e. particle (adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection)

As in (9e) the four kinds in the so-called eight parts of speech are together included in particle because of their indeclinability. While stating that his classification is not possible to make "so rigidly as to be left with no doubtful or borderline cases," he thinks his five groups as "consonant with reason" (*Philosophy* 92), insisting on the justification of classifying parts of speech, and refers to Sapir as a wrong idea:

[The part of speech] "reflects...our ability to compose that reality into a variety of formal patterns. A part of speech outside of the limitations of syntactic form is but a will o' the wisp. For this reason no logical scheme of the parts of speech...is of the slightest interest to the linguists. (*Philosophy* 118-9)

Sapir thinks to classify parts of speech is to define form and function of a word and that this is appropriate only language-specifically, but not cross-linguistically.[6]

Jespersen raises form, function, and notion as three grammatical standpoints, giving (10):   (*Philosophy* 56)

(10)   a. Form   b. Function   c. Notion

[id, t, d], kernel un-   ⎫   ⎧ past time, unreality in
changed (put), inner   ⎪   ⎪ present time (subjunctive),
changed (drank), dif-   ⎬ preterit ⎨ future time (It's time you
ferent kernel (was),   ⎪   ⎪ went to bed.), all times (Men
etc.   ⎭   ⎩ were deceivers ever.), etc.

As for form he regards it as an important criterion in deciding the kind or number of grammatical categories; as regards notion he says it, "though very important, is most difficult to deal with" (*Philosophy* 60).   Regarding function, the following words are significant: "It will be the grammarian's task...to investigate the relation between the notional and the syntactic categories" (*Philosophy* 55). What belongs to syntactic categories, according to him, is: number, case, tense, mood, voice, person, gender, word order, etc., which are largely equivalent to the so-called grammatical categories.   In the diagram (10), what would be included in function are adjective, plural, genitive, present, subjunctive, passive, etc.   All this means that function in him is something like a subcategory of syntactic categories.   Therefore his above words could be paraphrased as: "to investigate the relation between notion and function."   But at a glance this may sound inconsistent with his own claim for form as the analytical criterion; however, his analysis presupposes the ex-

istance of any forms as is said above in Sweet: "grammar... deals only with the meaning of the form itself." Hence, to restate more accurately the grammarian's task Jespersen advocates: "to investigate the relation between the notional and the syntactic categories *realized by form*." In (11):

(11)   a. And *to him* that knocketh it shall be opened.

       b. And *þam cnuciendum* bið ontyned.

       c. Et *pulsanti* aperietur.

       d. Und wer anklopft, *dem* wird geoffnet.   (Matt. vii. 8)

the grammatical category "dative" can be discussed concerning (11b, c, d) because of their specific inflectional forms, whereas (11a) is controversial. Entwistle mentions regarding the import of form: "A form is a thing in grammar, but a function is a speculation.... a grammarian is not called upon to explain a function if it does not exist in a given language as a form" (Entwistle 152). This is the point of discussion about the mood, reflecting each grammarian's viewpoint.

Against Sonnenschein's claim that case, tense and mood "denote categories of *meaning*, not...of *form*" (*Grammar*, 11, 3), Jespersen says that "mood...is a syntactic, not a notional category" (*Philosophy* 313). The problem seems to arise when he says that "Sonnenschein [lays stress] more on function than on form" (12b), "and I myself more on form than on function" (12b') (*System* 510). This word and the two grammarians' statements above would be diagrammatically described as: (<stands for "is stressed less than"; > for "is stressed more than")

(12)   Sonnenschein:

a. his own assertion   :   form $<$ (function$=$) notion

b. Jespersen's opinion :   form $<$ function ($=$notion)

Jespersen:

a'. his own assertion   :   (form$=$) syntactic cat. $>$ notion

b'. his opinion   :   form $>$ function ($=$notion)

Since in the discussion with Sonnenschein function and notion are identical, (12a, b, b') are no problem, whereas (12a') is unclear. Jespersen's syntactic category is, as mentioned above, largely equivalent to the grammatical category and is represented by function in his diagram. But from this the contradiction seems to arise: form$=$function$=$notion with no priority among them. But the truth is, now clearly, that the function's in (12b, b') are not identical with the syntactic category in (a'): the former just denotes notion in the light of Sonnenschein;[7] the latter, though represented as function, cannot be equated with notion the same way as in (b, b'). For the syntactic category in (a') is nothing but an abstract category or super-category of function, "a linguistic unit standing at the intersecting point, where form and notion meet," "Janus-like fac-[ing] both ways, toward form, and toward notion" (*Analytic* 98). (This reflects his fundamental idea that "sound and signification ...are inseparable in the life of language" (*Philosophy* 40).) This syntactic category, therefore, is, as it were, form with a particular function. After all, the problem lies in the term itself—function, because of its impossibility of indicating what is meant; this led him to coin the term "morphoseme" for function (*Analytic* 97).

IV

Here is part of the discussion about the mood between the form-
alist and the notionalist/functionalist.   In *Philosophy* (316) Jespersen
points out Sonnenschein's inconsistency that, in spite of saying that
"the *meaning* of the subjunctive is quite different from that of the
indicative" (*Grammar*, II, 62), Sonnenschein explains "Take care
that you are not caught" as "the indicative... with the meaning of the
subjunctive" (*Grammar*, II, 26).   Besides, though claiming for
meaning/function criteria, he analyzes (13b) as "subjunctive-
equivalent" (*Soul* 87):

(13)   a. It is essential that he stop this practice.

      b. It is essential that he *should stop* this practice.

insisting on the necessity to "limit the term 'subjunctive' to such
forms as correspond to the forms commonly called subjunctives in
other [European] languages" (*Soul* 87).   If consistency is demand-
ed in his system, (14a) should be subjunctive.

(14)   a. ...were...brought...little children, that he *should lay*
        his hands on them....

      b. ...wæron him gebrohte lytlingas to þæt he hys hand
        on hig *asette* (sub(junctive) pres(ent))....

      c. ... oblate sunt ei paruoli ut manus eis *imponeret* (sub.
        past)....

      d. ...le fueron presentados unos niños, para que *pusiese*
        (sub. past) las manos sobre ellos....

      e. Einige Leute brachten ihre Kinder zu Jesus, damit er
        ihnen die Hände *auflege* (sub. pres.)....

(Matt. xix. 13)

Curme is in the same position as Sonnenschein in saying that "the subjunctive is an idea, not a particular form," but is different in the extent in which the subjunctive is acknowledged, as he continues that the subjunctive "has always been expressed by a variety of means" ("Subjunctive" 390). So he regards such modal auxiliaries as in (14a) as subjunctive, mentioning that they "perform the same functions as the old simple subjunctive, only more effectively and with finer shades of meaning" (*Principles* 235). Curme's idea is that "they [distinct functions of the subjunctive] all represent the action or state as a conception of mind" (*Syntax* 391), considering the following as the subjunctive:

(15) a. He *may* know it.
      b. He *comes to* know it.
      c. He *is to* know it.
      d. He *has to* know it.
      e. *Let* him know it.
      f. *Possibly* he knows it.

His subjunctive idea of (15f) is similar to the epistemic, modality as in Halliday, for example, who says that "through modality, the speaker associates with the thesis [the content of information] an indication of its status and validity in his own judgment" (335).[8] (16) is the sample:

(16) a. This gazebo *may* have been built by him.
      b. (=a) *Possibly* this gazebo was built by him.
      c. She *must* be going to stop talking soon.
      d. (=c) *Surely* she'll stop talking soon.

Curme sharply realizes the common point among the sentences in

(16), but in the light of the term subjunctive, he seems to go too
far.

Leopold, taking grammar to be the scientific analysis of functions,
says that "neither form nor meaning are the primary domains of
grammar, but syntactical function" (*Form* 431). He regards the
functional approach as having its methodological justification in
historical and descriptive facts, and criticizes the formal approach
to analytic languages like English where forms have been more re-
stricted from their ancient task of reflecting functions distinctly.
Sonnenschein likewise writes: mood's "functions [different from
those of Leopold] survive to a great extent in English of the pre-
sent day, though most of the old distinctions of form have disap-
peared.... It [a proper definition of mood] must not be taken to
involve a difference of inflexion" (*Grammar*, III, 5). He takes form
to be "only one of the agencies whereby distinctions of meaning in
moods...are indicated" (*Soul* 54), criticizing the formalist for dis-
puting the fact that "the modern languages of our family are syn-
tactically akin to the ancient tongues of Greece and of Rome"
(*Soul* Preface vii).

True, both the formalist and the notionalist/functionalist share
the same idea of the inflectional and conjugational malfunction as
in Present English, but their attitudes toward form differ: the former
acknowledges only such formally-specific expressions functioning as a
grammatical category, while the latter looks upon form as merely
one of the agencies to indicate a grammatical category. One reason
for such a discrepancy may lie in their attitude toward Universal
Grammar. Jespersen thinks little of it, saying of the subjunctive

as a good example that:

> What in one language is expressed in every sentence with pains-
> taking precision, is in another language left unexpressed as if
> it were of no importance whatever.... it would be perfectly im-
> possible to give such a definition of the subjunctive in any of
> these languages [English, German, Danish, French, and Latin]
> as would assist us in deciding where to use it and where to use
> the indicative, still less such a definition as would at the same
> time cover its employment in all the languages mentioned.
> (*Philosophy* 48–49)

Obviously his approach is language-specific. Sonnenschein, on the
other, stands for Universal Grammar, saying: "In so far...as the
human mind is one and the same all the world over, human speech
is bound to exhibit some common features.... Hence the idea of a
Universal Grammar" (*Soul* Prefcae v). His aim is to disclose "an
actually existing identity of structure, which is disguised, but not an-
nihilated, by external changes of form" (*Soul* Preface ix).

V

Jespersen and Sonnenschein are both against the prescriptism, in-
sisting respectively that "of greater value...than [the] prescriptive
grammar is a purely descriptive grammar which aims at finding out
what is actually said and written" (*Essentials* 19), and that the laws
of language "do not rest on authority, but are discovered by ob-
servation" (*Grammar* 99). They aimed at the scientific approach.
For tha tpurpose they adopted the comparative and historical view.
Sonnenschein writes: "New light is thrown upon many a modern

construction by regarding it from a comparative and historical point of view" (*Soul* Preface viii), and Jespersen: "Where formerly [in descriptive linguistics] we saw only arbitrary rules and inexplicable exceptions, we now [in historical linguistics] in very many cases see the reasons" (*Philosophy* 30).   However, as a weak point of the traditional grammar, Nida points out that confusion in the descriptive analysis of language which comes from those viewpoints of traditional grammarians, saying "the historical viewpoint has prejudiced and distorted the descriptive view" (Nida 183).   Their approaches certainly cannot be flawless as far as the mood is concerned, as is understood from Jespersen's own words:

> We get nearer to the actual facts if we regard the indicative as the mood chosen when there is no special reason to the contrary, and the subjunctive as a mood required or allowable in certain cases varying from language to language.   (*Philosophy* 318)

In (17) and (18), for example, the same story is expressed differently:

(17)   a. ...if this [one sheep] *fall* (subj.) into a pit....

      b. ...gyf þæt *afylð*...on pytt....

      c. ...si *ceciderit* (subj.) haec...in foueam....

      d. ...si *cayere* (subj.) ésta en una fosa....

      e. ...es *fällt* in eine Grube....   (Matt. xii. 11)

(18)   a. And if Satan *casteth* out Satan....

      b. And gyf se deoful *adrifð* ut þone deoful....

      c. Et si satanas satanan *eicit*....

      d. Y si Satanas *echa* fuera á Satanas....

      e. Wenn der Satan sich selbst *austriebe* (subj.)....

(Matt. xii. 26)

Jespersen considers an ideal language to have always the same sound or the same modification of sounds for the same meaning and to express the same signification or function in the same formal way, as in Esperanto (19a):

(19) a. Se mi (vi/li/ili) *havus* la libron.... (If I (you/he/they) had the book)

b. Si *haberem (haberes/haberet/haberent)* librum....

The ideal language, which he thinks of as a formalist, therefore, has the one-to-one correspondence between form and notion, but actual languages have the many-to-many; this is why he tried to contrive his NOVIAL. Regarding the notion of case being far from clear-cut, Jespersen says that "languages vary enormously, even those which go back ultimately to the same 'parent-language.' Cases form one of the most irrational part of language in general" (*Philosophy* 186). No doubt the same holds good with mood, and so it may reflect grammarians' viewpoints quite faithfully.

As Dinneen says, truly the traditional grammar has the weakness that "it does not adequately distinguish...lexical, morphological, and syntactic meanings... [and] particular and universal features of languages" (Dinneen 171), but it posesses the strength that it is "the vehicle by means of which ordinary students and scholars have mastered many languages successfully for centuries" (Dinneen 170). Grammatical viewpoints so far touched upon are not far from the weakness but are with the strength as those who have learned some languages through the grammar and studied other grammars or grammatical theories will agree. The formalist's and notionalist/

functionalist's discussion is in this respect a good example of it, presenting a very incentive though difficult aspect of grammar— mood.

NOTES

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1   Modal verbs express "modality" defined as "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true" (Quirk *et al.* 219).

2   Sapir's "drift" can be summarized as: (i) the leveling of the distinction between the subjective and objective (Sapir 163), (ii) the tendency to fixed positions (166), (iii) the tendency toward invariable words (168), (iv) the tendency toward the restriction of inflected possessive forms to animate nouns and pronouns (165), etc.

3   "Notion" used by Jespersen is almost equivalent to "meaning," relating to facts of the world, mental states or logic.

4   Wrenn praises Sweet as "the greatest philologist that our country has so far produced" (Wrenn 512).

5   Since "I, they" and "my, their," which are pronouns in the so-called eight parts of speech, are subclassified as noun-words and adjective-words respectively, function as well as form is used as an analytic procedure.

6   After his quoted words, Sapir says: "No language wholly fails to distinguish noun [as something to talk about] and verb [as something said about the noun]." but these are not so much grammatical kinds as logical ones like "onōma" and "rhēma" as in Plato.

7   And Jespersen's words: "In the first part (0→I) we take a form as given and then inquire into its *meaning or function*" [underline mine] (*Philosophy* 40–41).

8   Epistemic modality is "the speaker's subjective qualification of a given state of affairs" (Gloossens 204).

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