

Lecture 8: The moods in Homeric Greek

1. Introduction

- The Old Theory: subjunctive and optative are parallel forms
optative more ‘remote’ than the subjunctive
- The New Theory: the two moods are not parallel
optative: deontic, epistemic and dynamic
subjunctive is more of a future tense
the difference between the moods is one of quality not quantity

2. Old theory

- Chantraine: “si l’on confronte le subjonctif et l’optatif, on remarque que le second ... exprime l’idée d’une façon plus atténuée que le subjonctif”.
- Wackernagel: subjunctive = ‘will’, optative = ‘wish’
- Goodwin: “The optative is commonly a less distinct and direct form of expression than the subjunctive, imperative, or indicative, in constructions of the same general character as those in which these moods are used”
- Reading Greek: “The indicative is the mood for what is *factual*, the subjunctive for what is *prospective*, the optative for contingencies which are *more remotely prospective*.”
- Palmer most explicit: optative = ‘modal-past’ form of the subjunctive
- Endings: subjunctive uses ‘primary’ endings
optative uses ‘historic’ endings

Present

<i>Indicative</i>		<i>Subjunctive</i>	
Present	Past	Present	Past
‘present indicative’	‘imperfect indicative’	‘present subjunctive’	‘present optative’

Aorist

<i>Indicative</i>		<i>Subjunctive</i>	
Present	Past	Present	Past
‘aorist’ (primary)	‘aorist’ (historic)	‘aorist subjunctive’	‘aorist optative’

3. Problems

- Endings: historic endings = unmarked endings
- Optative does not relate to subjunctive in same way imperfect does to present

4. Case study 1: the 'non-epistemic' uses of the moods

- Parallel = same range of meanings and a semantic difference of quality
- Range not the same
Subjunctive first person positive, second person negative
Optative all persons, mainly 2nd and 3rd
- Semantically: subjunctive 'replaces the imperative' in certain constructions while optative expresses wish?
- But claim can be disputed

a) Jussive subjunctive = first person imperative

- Singular often epistemic:

16.129 δύσεο τεύχεα θᾶσσον, ἐγὼ δέ κε λαὸν ἀγείρω.
Do on my armour with all haste, and I will gather the host."

- Plural jussive does exist

5.34 νῶϊ δὲ χαζώμεσθα, Διὸς δ' ἀλεώμεθα μῆνιν;
But for us, let us give place, and avoid the wrath of Zeus.

- Is it a real imperative?
- Illocutionary force only? Implication only?

b) Prohibition = replacing imperative in aorist

Aspect	Positive	Negative
Imperfective	present imperative	μή + present imperative
Perfective	aorist imperative	μή + aorist subjunctive

- Axis not equivalent: aorist subjunctive is used for prohibitions with future reference only
- Negator alone carries the imperative force cf Sanskrit injunctive

c) Optative of wish = more remote imperative?

1.42 τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν.
let the Danaans pay for my tears by your arrows

4.304 μηδέ τις ἵπποσύνη τε καὶ ἠνορέηφι πεποιθὼς
οἷος πρόσθ' ἄλλων μεμάτω Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι,
μηδ' ἀναχωρεῖτω·
Neither let any man, trusting in his horsemanship and his valour, be eager to fight with the Trojans alone in front of the rest, nor yet let him draw back;

- Difference not of less will
- Difference of agency

d) Optative dynamic as well:

4.539 ἔνθα κεν οὐκέτι ἔργον ἀνήρ ὀνόσαιτο μετελθὼν,
Then could no man any more enter into the battle and make light thereof

5. Case study 2: the ‘epistemic’ uses of the moods

1. Main clauses

- Subjunctive often found with future meaning in Homer
- Certain future

1.180 ἀπειλήσω δέ τοι ὦδε·

But I will threaten you thus:

- But also found with the subjunctive:

1.182 ὡς ἔμ’ ἀφαιρεῖται Χρυσηίδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,

τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ τ’ ἐμῇ καὶ ἐμοῖς ἐτάροισι

πέμψω, ἐγὼ δέ κ’ ἄγω Βρισηίδα καλλιπάρηον

as Phoebus Apollo takes from me the daughter of Chryses, her with my ship and my companions I will send back, but I will myself come to your tent and take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize,

- Uncertain subjunctive:

3.54 οὐκ ἄν τοι χραισμη κίθαρις τά τε δῶρ’ Ἀφροδίτης

Then will thy lyre help thee not, neither the gifts of Aphrodite,`

- But also found with the future:

4.238 ἡμεῖς αὐτ’ ἀλόχους τε φίλας καὶ νήπια τέκνα

ἄξομεν ἐν νήεσσιν, ἐπὶν πτολίεθρον ἔλωμεν.

and we shall bear away in our ships their dear wives and little children, when we shall have taken their citadel.”

2. Conditionals

- Future indicative rare in protases
- Resumptive:

17.418 τό κεν ἦμιν ἄφαρ πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη

εἰ τοῦτον Τρῶεσσι μεθήσομεν ἵπποδάμοισιν

ἄστυ πότι σφέτερον ἐρύσαι καὶ κῦδος ἀρέσθαι.

That were for us straightway better far, if we are to yield this man to the Trojans, tamers of horses, to hale to their city, and win them glory.”

‘If we really do give up this body (and I take it from your present pathetic actions that we are) – then that would be terrible indeed’

- But also found with subjunctive

2.364 εἰ δέ κεν ὡς ἔρξης καὶ τοι πείθωνται Ἀχαιοί,

γνώση ἔπειθ’ ὅς θ’ ἡγεμόνων κακὸς ὅς τέ νυ λαῶν

ἦδ’ ὅς κ’ ἐσθλὸς ἔησι·

If thou do thus, and the Achaeans obey thee, thou wilt know then who among thy captains is a coward, and who among thy men, and who too is brave;

- Open:

20.26 εἰ γὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς οἶος ἐπὶ Τρῶεσσι μαχεῖται

οὐδὲ μίνυνθ’ ἔξουσι ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα.

For if Achilles shall fight alone against the Trojans, not even for a little

space will they hold back the swift-footed son of Peleus.

‘Real conditional’

- But also found with subjunctive:

3.289 εἰ δ' ἂν ἐμοὶ τιμὴν Πριάμος Πριάμοιό τε παῖδες
τίνειν οὐκ ἐθέλωσιν Ἀλεξάνδροιο πεσόντος,
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ ἔπειτα μαχήσομαι εἵνεκα ποινῆς
αὔθι μένων, ἧός κε τέλος πολέμοιο κιχέω.
*if Priam and the sons of Priam be not minded to pay recompense unto me,
when Alexander falleth, then will I fight on even thereafter, to get me
recompense, and will abide here until I find an end of war.”*

- Emphatic:

12.248 εἰ δὲ σὺ δηϊοτήτος ἀφέξεαι, ἢέ τιν' ἄλλον
παρφάμενος ἐπέεσσιν ἀποτρέψεις πολέμοιο,
αὐτίκ' ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεῖς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσεις
*Howbeit, if thou shalt hold aloof from battle, or shalt beguile with thy
words an other, and turn him from war, forthwith smitten by my spear
shalt thou lose thy life.”*

Threat

- But also found with subjunctive:

5.132 ἀτὰρ εἴ κε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη
ἔλθῃσ' ἐς πόλεμον, τήν γ' οὐτάμεν ὄξεϊ χαλκῷ.
*save only if Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, shall enter the battle, her do thou
smite with a thrust of the sharp bronze.”*

3. Optative used in unreal conditionals

1.255 ἢ κεν γηθήσαι Πριάμος Πριάμοιό τε παῖδες
ἄλλοι τε Τρῶες μέγα κεν κεχαροῖατο θυμῷ
εἰ σφῶϊν τάδε πάντα πυθοῖατο μαρναμένοισιν,
οἳ περὶ μὲν βουλήν Δαναῶν, περὶ δ' ἔστέ μάχεσθαῖ.
*Truly would Priam and the sons of Priam rejoice, and the rest of the
Trojans would be most glad at heart, were they to hear all this of you two
quarrelling, you who are chief among the Danaans in counsel and chief
in war.*

- Degree of hypotheticality?
- Wierzbicka: “what IS that ‘hypotheticality’ which allegedly comes in different degrees in different languages?”.
- *Not* (only) used when the speaker considers their fulfilment less probable
- For example, she gives the sentence ‘If I were you, I would go’
- Does *not* mean ‘It is very improbable that I am you’.

Reading

Palmer 2001, *Mood and modality*

Goodwin 1999, *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*