

## On the *If You Be* Construction\*

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### 1. Introduction

It is one of the hard problems in linguistics how to analyze colloquial and idiomatic expressions in an appropriate way. Being faced with idioms, one might be tempted just to leave them out of consideration because of their deviance from the norm. However, just because an expression is colloquial and idiomatic does not mean that it is not worthy of any serious grammatical investigation; there are idioms worthy of serious grammatical investigation (cf. Kay and Fillmore (1999), Kay, Fillmore and O'Conner (1988), among others). In fact, a closer inspection of an idiomatic and colloquial expression often reveals some essential aspects of grammar which cannot be found if we observe only the "core" of a language.

This paper is devoted to supporting this view, focusing on one idiomatic and colloquial expression in present-day English, which contains the sequence *if you be*, as exemplified by the following:

- (1) If you be good, I'll get you a present. (Ransom (1986:66))

In this paper, we call the type of sentence the *if you be* construction (hereafter, the IYB construction). Little attention has been paid to the IYB construction in the literature.<sup>1</sup> However, the study of this construction affords an important insight into the study of how a new expression is created, that is, the study of creativity in language.

Syntactically, the IYB construction is very similar to conditionals like (2), and semantically or functionally, to what Bolinger (1977:161) calls "conditional imperatives" like (3).

- (2) If he hits .250 or above this season, the Yankees will renew his contract.  
 (3) Be nice, and I'll give you a big kiss.

Although the IYB construction shares some properties with the above two constructions, it will be argued that the construction has its own properties which are not attributable to these constructions. Thus, the IYB construction should be seen as an independent construction. We will further show

\* An earlier version of this paper was read at the 130th monthly meeting of the Tsukuba English Linguistics Colloquium held at the University of Tsukuba on May 31, 2001. I am grateful to the audience there and the following teachers for valuable comments and criticisms: Yukio Hirose, Nobuhiro Kaga, Minoru Nakau, Masao Okazaki, Masaharu Shimada and Koichi Takezawa. Special thanks are due to Hiromitsu Akashi, Taichi Hirota, Yuko Kobukata, Manabu Kusayama and Joe Morita for reading earlier versions of this paper and making a number of constructive suggestions. My deep gratitude also goes to Eleanor Olds Batchelder, who kindly acted as an informant and gave me a lot of interesting data. Needless to say, all remaining inadequacies are my own.

<sup>1</sup> As far as my knowledge goes, Ransom (1986:66) is the first who refers to what we call the IYB construction, but she does not give any detailed account of it. Konno (2000) also refers to the IYB construction and shows its productivity. These previous studies share the view that the IYB construction is a sort of present subjunctive, which, however, will prove inadequate in this paper. See section 5 for why it does not hold that the IYB construction is a kind of present subjunctive.

how the IYB construction comes into being, and propose that there is a process by which a new expression like the IYB construction is created. The analysis proposed here is based on the notion of blending which Fauconnier and Turner (1996) propose. It will be claimed that this notion makes it possible to capture both similarities and dissimilarities between the IYB construction and the other two related constructions, i.e. conditionals and conditional imperatives. Through a detailed analysis of the IYB construction, we will arrive at the conclusion that grammar contains a mechanism for creating new expressions, which is characterized by the notion of blending.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the study of the IYB construction here is closely linked to the study of creativity in language. In this way, we will be in a position to say that “the realm of idiomaticity in a language includes a great deal that is ... worthy of serious grammatical investigation,” as Kay, Fillmore and O’Conner (1988:501) claim. Lastly, we will discuss whether it is possible to regard the IYB construction as a sort of present subjunctive, and will claim that the construction cannot be seen as such for some reasons.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 points out some semantic/pragmatic and syntactic properties of the IYB construction. Section 3 compares the IYB construction with conditionals and conditional imperatives, and examines similarities and dissimilarities between the IYB construction and these two constructions. In section 4, on the basis of the notion of blending proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (1996), we will propose a construction-producing process which blends two existing constructions to yield a new construction, and make an analysis of how the IYB construction is created. Section 5 challenges the idea that the IYB construction can be seen as a kind of present subjunctive: on the basis of this idea we will venture some possible alternatives to the analysis in the preceding section, and discuss whether they are viable or not. Section 6 makes some concluding remarks.

## 2. Properties of the IYB Construction<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1. *Semantic/Pragmatic Properties*

The IYB construction has four interesting semantic/pragmatic properties. One of them is that the IYB construction is contextually restricted very much; the IYB construction is most typically used when a parent scolds his/her child.

Secondly, in relation to the above contextual property, the IYB construction has a certain particular communicative function. Suppose for concreteness that a mother makes the following remark to her son, who has a terror of dentists:

- (4) If you be quiet while the dentist examines you, I’ll buy you whatever you want.

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<sup>2</sup>For analyses of other blended constructions, see Hirose (1991, 1998), among others.

<sup>3</sup>The readers should keep in mind that some of the properties below are not particular to the IYB construction. On this point, see section 3, where we will make clear which properties among the presented here are particular to the IYB construction.

What is significant here is that the *if*-clause is about what she wants him to do or how she wants him to behave, and the consequent is about what she supposes he wants her to do. To put it more specifically, the *if*-clause expresses the mother's desire that her son be quiet during the examination and the consequent expresses the son's desire for a present supposed by the mother. Thus, the communicative function of the IYB construction is summarized as follows:

- (5) The speaker, in exchange for the promise expressed in the consequent that she will do what she supposes the hearer wants, appeals to him to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the *if*-clause.<sup>4</sup>

(5) implies that the *if*-clause expresses what the speaker wants to communicate most in the IYB construction; the speaker's main focus is on what the *if*-clause describes rather than on what the consequent describes in the IYB construction. This suggests that there is a pragmatics-syntax mismatch in the IYB construction. In the IYB construction, the *if*-clause is syntactically subordinate to the consequent, but the *if*-clause is pragmatically superordinate to the consequent in that the *if*-clause describes what the speaker regards as the most important to communicate.

Thirdly, the IYB construction can describe only a limited class of situations; the IYB construction must describe what the speaker thinks desirable at the time of utterance. This is illustrated in the following:

- (6) a. If you be nice, I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. If you be a good girl, I'll give you a piece of candy.  
 (7) a. ?If you be naughty again, I'll slap you.  
 b. ?If you be a bad boy again, I'll give you a punch on the head.

Without any special context, for a child to be nice or to be a good girl is desirable to his/her parent, and for a child to be kissed or to be given a piece of candy by his/her parent is desirable to the child. By contrast, for a child to be naughty or to be a bad boy is undesirable to his/her parent, and for a parent to slap his/her child or to give his/her child a punch on the head is undesirable to the child. Thus, the situations described by the sentences in (6) are desirable while those described by the sentences in (7) are undesirable. As the contrast between (6) and (7) shows, if we force the IYB construction to describe undesirable situations, it sounds bookish and marginal. Note that this property is deeply concerned with the contextual property of the IYB construction. As has been pointed out above, the IYB construction is most typically used when a parent scolds his/her child. Therefore, it may safely be inferred that parental love has something to do with the IYB construction; it orders parents to say what they hope for their children in a positive way. To put it another way, parental love prevents the IYB construction from describing undesirable situations.

Lastly, the predicate of the *if*-clause of the IYB construction must describe controllable situations:

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<sup>4</sup> "She" refers to the speaker and "he" the hearer.

- (8) a. \*If you be 7 years old, I'll take you abroad. (So, be patient now.)  
 b. \*If you be a genius, I'll buy you whatever you want. (So, read as many books as you can.)
- (9) a. \*If you be seen with matches, I'll spank you.  
 b. \*If you be praised by your teacher, I'll tell your father to buy you that toy you want.

All the predicates of the *if*-clauses in (8) and (9) describe situations which are not within the voluntary control of the addressee *you*. As for (8), neither to be seven years old nor to be a genius is a controllable situation. In fact, one cannot control his age let alone his intelligence. Note that even when a controllable act is inferred, as shown by the bracketed sentences in (8), the acceptability of these sentences does not improve. As for (9), some remarks are necessary. The fact that the *if*-clauses are in the passive voice suggests that there are implicit agents and therefore the subjects of the *if*-clauses are understood not as agents but as patients. Given that a patient cannot control the relevant situation, the subjects in (9) are not understood to be controllers of the described situations. Thus, to explain the fact more accurately, we might well argue that the subject of the *if*-clause of the IYB construction must be understood to control the relevant situation.

### 2.3. Syntactic Properties

In this subsection, we will observe several syntactic properties of the IYB construction. First, as is clear from the instances observed so far, the IYB construction takes the form of *if*S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>.

Secondly, the subject of the *if*-clause is restricted to *you*, as the following contrast illustrates:

- (10) a. If you be nice, I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. If you be a good girl, I'll give you a piece of candy. (= (6))
- (11) a. \*If John be good at the kindergarten, I'll take him to the zoo.  
 b. \*If John be a good boy at the kindergarten, I'll take him to the zoo.

Thirdly, the verb of the *if*-clause lacks tense inflection and is restricted to *be*. To borrow Kaga's (1985) terminology, the *be* in the *if*-clause is the "dynamic *be*," which contrasts with the "stative *be*." The *be* in question cannot be the stative *be* since, as has been pointed out, in the IYB construction the predicate of the *if*-clause must describe controllable situations (cf. (8)-(9)). With respect to other verbs than *be*, we cannot tell whether they are in the present tense or in the bare-stem form because, as we have just seen, the subject of the *if*-clause is restricted to *you* in the IYB construction. Therefore, we keep those verbs other than *be* out of discussion.

A fourth property is that the construction rejects *not* of sentential negation in the *if*-clause:

- (12) a. \*If you not be noisy, I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. \*If you not be a bad boy, I'll give you many pieces of candy.

The situation does not improve even if the supportive *do* is inserted:

- (13) a. \*If you don't be noisy, I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. \*If you don't be a bad boy, I'll give you many pieces of candy.

However, this does not mean that the *if*-clause of the construction rejects negation. Indeed, it

permits *never*, which also serves as a negative marker:

- (14) a. If you never be naughty again, I'll take you to the zoo.  
 b. If you never be a bad boy again, I'll give you many pieces of candy.

Lastly, the construction prohibits the absence of the subject of the *if*-clause:

- (15) \*If be quiet, I'll give you a big kiss.

As (15) shows, the construction requires the subject of the *if*-clause, i.e. *you*, to be present.

In face of the above syntactic properties, a question immediately arises as to how much productivity (the *if*-clause of) the IYB construction shows. Our answer to this question is as follows. These syntactic properties make the sequence *if you be* almost frozen. Therefore, it can easily be assumed that the answer to the above question is concerned with what follows this sequence; the IYB construction behaves differently depending on what follows the sequence *if you be*. For example, it is possible for an AP or a NP to follow the sequence *if you be* while a present participle and a past participle cannot. This is illustrated by the following:

- (16) If you be quiet while the dentist examines you, I'll buy you whatever you want. (= (4))  
 (17) If you be a good girl, I'll give you a piece of candy. (= (6b))  
 (18) \*If you be seated on your own chair, I'll tell you a fairy tale.  
 (19) \*If you be reading this book when I come home, I'll take you to the zoo tomorrow.

Thus, it is now clear that the position after the *if you be* sequence is where the *if*-clause of the IYB construction shows (partial) productivity.

### 2.3. Summary

The properties of the IYB construction which we have observed so far are summarized in the following list:

- (20) The IYB construction
- a. is most typically used when a parent scolds his/her child.
  - b. conveys that the speaker, in exchange for the promise expressed in the consequent that she will do what she supposes the hearer wants, appeals to him to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the *if*-clause.
  - c. must describe what the speaker thinks desirable at the time of utterance.
  - d. requires that what is described by the predicate of the *if*-clause be controllable.
  - e. takes the form of *if* S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>.
  - f. requires *you* for the subject of the *if*-clause.
  - g. requires the bare-stem *be* for the verb of the *if*-clause.
  - h. prohibits *not* of sentential negation in the *if*-clause.
  - i. prohibits the absence of the subject of the *if*-clause.

This list tells that the IYB construction is highly constrained by pragmatic/semantic and syntactic restrictions, and is thus not a general but a specific construction.

In the next section, we will compare the IYB construction with other two constructions in present-day English and examine whether all the properties observed are particular to the IYB construction or not.

### 3. Comparing the IYB Construction with Other Constructions

This section compares the IYB construction with other two constructions, i.e. conditionals and what Bolinger (1977:161) calls “conditional imperatives.” Throughout the discussion, “conditionals” refer only to those sentences which take the form of *if* S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, as in (2), and “conditional imperatives” only to those sentences which consist of an imperative, *and* and a tensed clause, as in (3). The reason for the two comparisons is that these two constructions share some properties with the IYB construction. For example, both IYB constructions and conditionals take the form of *if* S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, and the communicative function of conditional imperatives is very similar to that of the IYB construction (cf. (5) and (20b)), as we have mentioned at the outset of the paper. Therefore, before presenting some dissimilarities between the IYB construction and each of these two constructions, we will first see some similarities between them. The two comparisons will show that six out of the nine properties of the IYB construction in (20) are attributable to either of the two constructions, and yet the remaining three properties are attributable to neither of the two, that is, they are peculiar to the IYB construction.

#### 3.1. Comparison with Conditionals

##### 3.1.1. Similarities

Of the nine properties in (20) that the IYB construction has, conditionals also have two: One is (20e); namely, both the IYB construction and conditionals take the form of *if* S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>. This is illustrated by the following:

- (21) a. If he hits .250 or above this season, the Yankees will renew his contract. (= (2))  
 b. If you be a good girl, I'll give you a piece of candy. (= (6b))

The other is (20i); in both constructions, the *if*-clause prohibits the absence of the subject:

- (22) a. \*If hits .250 or above this season, the Yankees will renew his contract.  
 b. \*If be quiet, I'll give you a big kiss.

(22) shows that *if* requires a full clause in both constructions.

##### 3.1.2. Dissimilarities

As we have just seen above, the similarities observed between IYB constructions and conditionals are considered to be syntactic. Interesting enough is the fact that despite their syntactic resemblance, IYB constructions and conditionals show a variety of semantic/pragmatic contrasts. Before turning to the semantic/pragmatic differences, let us briefly see the surface differences between the two. Unlike the IYB construction, conditionals do not have the syntactic properties of (20f, g, h). Notice that the syntactic differences with respect to (20f, g) suggests that the idiomaticity of the IYB construction is higher than that of conditionals in the sense that the

*if*-clause in the former is more frozen than that of the latter (see also section 2.3.).

Now, concerning the semantic/pragmatic differences between the two constructions, we can argue that they show a contrast with respect to (20a, b, c, d). The difference in (20d) is easily shown by the following contrast.

- (23) a. \*If you be 7 years old, I'll take you abroad. (cf. (8a))  
 b. ... if the tree is 2,000 years old it'll be one of only about 40 trees in western Europe to have reached this age. (BNC<sup>5</sup>)

The difference in acceptability between (23a) and (23b) suggests that the *if*-clause of the IYB construction must describe controllable situations, whereas that of conditionals is free from such a restriction.

Of special note are the differences with respect to (20b) and (20c). As for (20b), one might argue that conditionals like *If you aren't noisy, I'll give you a big kiss.* can have the same pragmatic function as IYB constructions. Truly, by using the above conditional sentence, the speaker may intend to order the hearer to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the *if*-clause. However, we assume that this function is not inherent in conditionals but contextually derived, while the communicative function of (20b) is inherent in the IYB construction. This is reflected in the fact that the occurrence of the IYB construction is contextually more restricted than that of conditionals; in other words, conditionals do not have property (20a). Thus, we might well argue that the difference in (20b) brings about the difference in (20a).

Turning to the difference with respect to (20c), we can argue that unlike the IYB construction, conditionals do not necessarily describe what the speaker thinks desirable at the time of utterance. In this respect, Akatsuka (1998, 1999) makes a notable observation. According to her analysis, the semantic relation between the *if*-clause and the consequent in conditionals is successfully characterized by what she calls the Desirability Hypothesis:

- (24) ... [T]he natural logic working in our everyday reasoning is extremely simple, and ... in many uses of conditionals, the logic is actually 'Desirable leads to Desirable' and 'Undesirable leads to Undesirable.' (Akatsuka (1999:202))

The Desirability Hypothesis says that in a conditional, i) if the antecedent states what is desirable to the speaker, then the consequent must be about what the speaker supposes is desirable to the hearer, and ii) if the antecedent states what is undesirable to the speaker, then the consequent must be about what the speaker supposes is undesirable to the hearer. To put it more simply, in conditionals the desirability of the antecedent must be in agreement with that of the consequent. This is schematized as in the following:

- (25) a. DESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-DESIRABLE  
 b. UNDESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-UNDESIRABLE (Akatsuka (1998:15))

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<sup>5</sup>The British National Corpus [<http://www.info.ox.ac.uk/bnc/>]

Suppose that a mother says the following to her son:

- (26) a. If you eat your spinach, you'll be strong.  
 b. If you don't eat your spinach, I'll spank you. (Akatsuka (1998:17))

According to Akatsuka (1998), (26a) follows the DESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-DESIRABLE logic. In the context of (26a), it is generally the case that the speaker (the mother) considers desirable the situation of her child eating up his spinach, and also that she supposes desirable to him the state of getting strong. On the other hand, (26b) follows the UNDESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-UNDESIRABLE logic. In the context of (26b), it is generally the case that she considers undesirable the situation of him not eating up his spinach, and also that she supposes undesirable to him the state of being spanked by her. On the basis of this observation, it can safely be said that conditionals describe either what is desirable or what is undesirable.

It is in this respect that the IYB construction shows a sharp contrast with conditionals. Remember what we have observed in (20c), which we reproduce here for the sake of convenience:

- (27) The IYB construction must describe what the speaker thinks desirable at the time of utterance.

Recall that we have argued for (27) by observing the following:

- (28) a. If you be nice, I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. If you be a good girl, I'll give you a piece of candy. (= (6))  
 (29) a. ?If you be naughty again, I'll slap you.  
 b. ?If you be a bad boy again, I'll give you a punch on the head. (= (7))

In (28) and (29), the desirability of the antecedent and that of the consequent are in agreement: both the *if*-clauses and the consequents in (28) and (29) describe desirable situations and undesirable situations, respectively. However, the sentences in (29) sound marginal. This contrast shows that the IYB construction cannot describe undesirable situations. Thus, the discussion concerning (20c) can be summarized as follows: conditionals allow both DESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-DESIRABLE and UNDESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-UNDESIRABLE cases while the IYB construction allows only DESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-DESIRABLE cases.

### 3.2. Comparison with Conditional Imperatives

#### 3.2.1. Similarities

The IYB construction shares four properties with conditional imperatives. Firstly, the communicative function of the IYB construction, i.e. (20b), is essentially the same as that of conditional imperatives. Consider the following:

- (30) a. Be nice, and I'll give you a big kiss.  
 b. If you be nice, I'll give you a big kiss. (= (6a))

(30a) may sound more acrid than (30b), but, under the same context, they both convey roughly the same; namely, that the speaker, in exchange for the promise expressed in the consequent that she will do what she supposes the hearer wants, appeals to him to bring about the state of affairs



expressed in the antecedent. Note that the term “antecedent” here does duty as a cover term for the *if*-clause of the IYB construction and the imperative clause of conditional imperatives.

A second similarity concerns property (20d); namely, both constructions reject uncontrollable situations in the antecedent:

- (31) \*Be 7 years old, and I’ll take you abroad.  
 (32) \*If you be 7 years old, I’ll take you abroad. (= (8a))

As has been mentioned earlier, one cannot control his/her age.

Thirdly, both constructions require *you* for the subject of the antecedent (cf. (20f)):

- (33) a. You sit down, and I’ll tell you what you have to do.  
       b. \*She sit down, and I’ll tell you what you have to do.  
 (34) a. If you be nice, I’ll give you a big kiss. (= (6a))  
       b. \*If John be good at the kindergarten, I’ll take him to the zoo. (= (11a))

(33) shows that when pronounced, the subject of the antecedent of conditional imperatives must be *you*, and (34) that the IYB construction requires *you* for the subject of the *if*-clause.

Lastly, as (30) shows, both constructions require a bare infinitive for the verb of the antecedent. The only difference is that the IYB construction requires the bare-stem *be* while conditional imperatives do not have such a lexical specification (cf. (20g)).

### 3.2.2. Dissimilarities

The two constructions in question are syntactically different: unlike IYB constructions, conditional imperatives do not have syntactic properties (20e, g, h, i). It is important to note, however, that they also show a semantic/pragmatic difference. Specifically, they show a contrast with respect to the absence/presence of properties (20a, c). The more noteworthy is the difference concerning the latter; that is, conditional imperatives, like conditionals, describe both desirable and undesirable situations, while IYB constructions allow only desirable situations. This is exemplified in the following:

- (35) a. Don’t move, and I won’t shoot you.  
       b. Be nice, and I’ll give you a big kiss.  
       c. Be a good girl, and I’ll give you many pieces of candy.  
 (36) a. Move, and I’ll shoot you.  
       b. Be naughty, and I won’t take you to the zoo.  
       c. Be a bad boy, and I won’t give you any piece of candy.  
 (37) a. If you be nice, I’ll give you a big kiss.  
       b. If you be a good girl, I’ll give you many pieces of candy. (= (6))  
 (38) a. ?If you be naughty again, I’ll slap you.  
       b. ?If you be a bad boy again, I’ll give you a punch on the head. (= (7))

(35) follows the DESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-DESIRABLE logic while (36) follows the UNDESIRABLE-LEADS-TO-UNDESIRABLE one. By contrast, the IYB construction, as the contrast

between (37) and (38) shows, excludes undesirable situations.

### 3.3. Summary

The two comparisons have shown that IYB constructions share properties (20e, i) with conditionals and properties (20b, d, f, g) with conditional imperatives. This leads us to conclude that IYB constructions are closely related to both conditionals and conditional imperatives. Further, from what have been observed, we can ascertain that IYB constructions are more specific than the other related constructions in every respect.

Goldberg (1995:72) uses the notion of inheritance to capture the relation between constructions which are related in some way. On the basis of this notion, it can be assumed that "inheritance links" are established between IYB constructions and the other two related constructions. According to her notation, an inheritance relation between two constructions  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  such that  $C_2$  inherits from  $C_1$  is represented as follows:

$$(39) \quad \begin{array}{c} C_1 \\ \downarrow \\ C_2 \end{array}$$

Notice here that inheritance links are considered to be asymmetric, as the arrow in (39) indicates. As Goldberg (1995:73) and Hirose (1998:596) argue, the direction of inheritance is determined by "abstraction hierarchies" which require  $C_1$  to be more abstract or general than  $C_2$ . As is clear from the comparisons made here, the IYB construction is more specific than both conditionals and conditional imperatives in the sense that the former is pragmatically, semantically and syntactically more restricted than the latter two constructions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the direction of the inheritance links between IYB constructions and the other related constructions are from the latter to the former. To put it more specifically, we can say that IYB constructions *inherit* properties (20e, i) from conditionals and properties (20b, d, f, g) from conditional imperatives. This idea is roughly represented as in Figure 1. The analysis presented here suggests that the IYB construction is a mixed or blended construction.

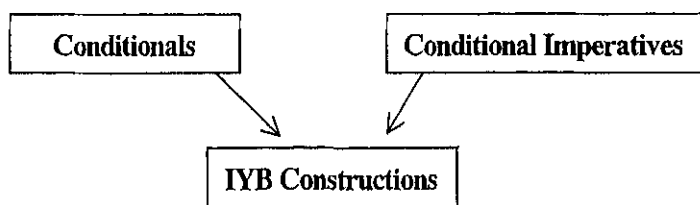


Figure 1.

One more remark is necessary, however; it is not the case that the IYB construction is just a mixture of the two related constructions. For, as has been shown, the IYB construction has its own properties; that is, properties (20a, c, h) are not shared between the IYB construction and the related constructions. This strongly suggests that the IYB construction has a separate status. From these considerations, it follows that the IYB construction is a blended and separate construction.

The analysis based on the notion of inheritance has an advantage of being able to cover the blended aspects of the IYB construction, but it is problematic in that it does not cover its independent aspects. Then, the next step is to explore a more comprehensive mechanism to account for how grammar or, more precisely, the grammar of English yields the IYB construction.

#### 4. A Recipe for Constructional Blending

The problem raised in the preceding section is solved if we adopt the notion of blending which Fauconnier and Turner (1996) propose. They characterize the notion of blending as follows:

- (40) In blending, structure from two input spaces is projected to a separate space, the “blend.” The blend inherits partial structure from the input spaces, and has emergent structure of its own. (Fauconnier and Turner (1996:113))

In order for two input spaces to be blended, they must have some structure(s) in common. The structures shared by the two inputs are projected to a “generic space, [which is] connected to both input spaces” (cf. Fauconnier and Turner (1996:113)). It is in this respect that the notion of blending is crucially different from that of inheritance. The former stipulates the relation between the two inputs while the latter does not. Note also the following statement by Fauconnier and Turner (1996:116):

- (41) Many phenomena give rise to blends: inventive actions, analogy, dramatic performance, counterfactuals, integrated meanings, *grammatical constructions*.  
[Italics mine]

What is important here is that grammatical constructions do give rise to blending. In order to explain how the grammar of English yields the IYB construction, let us here particularize the general notion of blending in (40) and call it *constructional blending*. We define constructional blending as follows:

- (42) Constructional blending (CB) is a dynamic construction-producing process, which *blends* some properties of two existing constructions  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  and yields a new construction  $C_3$ . For CB to operate,  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  must have at least one property in common.  $C_3$ , the new construction created by CB, acquires emergent properties not attributable to the two parent constructions besides the inherited properties, and consequently,  $C_3$  attains the status of a separate construction.

It is important to note that the notion of CB includes the notion of inheritance, as is clear from the above definition. Of more note is that the new construction yielded by CB must have some emergent properties.

Applying the notion of CB to the analysis of the IYB construction, we can say that  $C_1$  and  $C_2$ , the two input constructions, are the conditional construction and the conditional imperative construction, and  $C_3$ , the new construction, is the IYB construction. Before proceeding further, we

reproduce (20) as (43) for the sake of convenience:

- (43) The IYB construction
- is most typically used when a parent scolds his/her child.
  - conveys that the speaker, in exchange for the promise expressed in the consequent that she will do what she supposes the hearer wants, appeals to him to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the *if*-clause.
  - must describe what the speaker thinks desirable at the time of utterance.
  - requires that what is described by the predicate of the *if*-clause be controllable.
  - takes the form of *if*S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>.
  - requires *you* for the subject of the *if*-clause.
  - requires the bare-stem *be* for the verb of the *if*-clause.
  - prohibits *not* of sentential negation in the *if*-clause.
  - prohibits the absence of the subject of the *if*-clause.

By using the notion of CB, we can represent the way the IYB construction is created as follows:

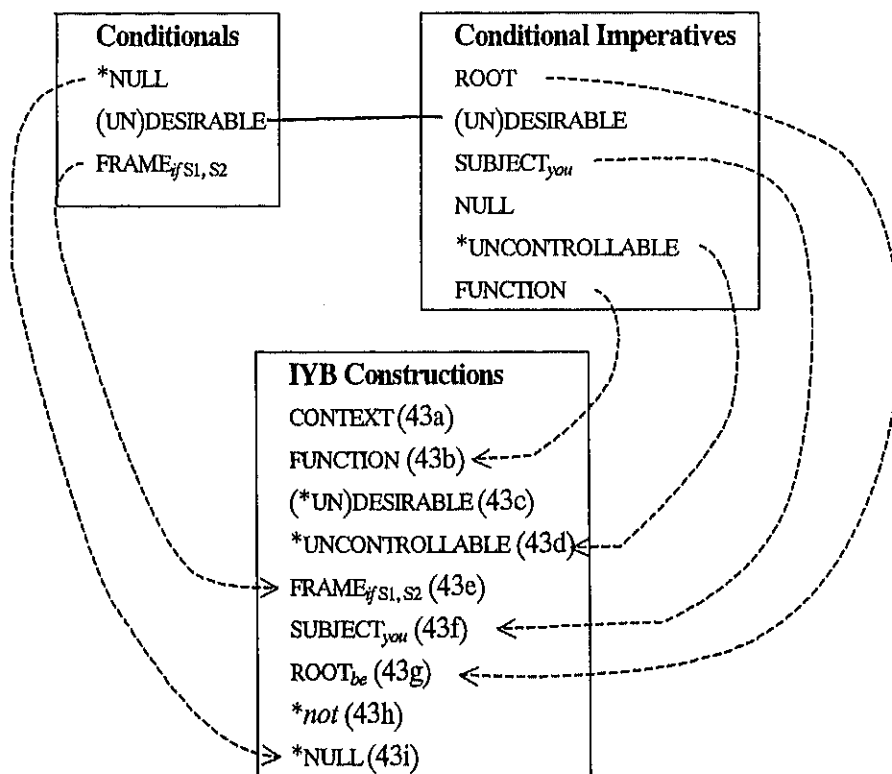


Figure 2.

In figure 2, properties (43a-i) are represented as CONTEXT, FUNCTION, (\*UN)DESIRABLE, \*UNCONTROLLABLE, FRAME<sub>if S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub></sub>, SUBJECT<sub>you</sub>, ROOT<sub>be</sub>, \*not and \*NULL, respectively. The solid line here indicates that there is some property which is shared between the two input constructions.

Dotted arrows indicate inheritance relation between constructions. Now we are ready to account for how the IYB construction comes into being. As definition (41) requires, conditionals and conditional imperatives must have at least one property in common so as to be blended. Remember that the two constructions allow both desirable and undesirable situations (cf. (26), (35) and (36)). It is this commonality that motivates CB. Here this is indicated by the solid line which links the two UNDESIRABLE's in conditionals and conditional imperatives. As figure 2 shows,  $FRAME_{SI, S2}$  and \*NULL are mapped from conditionals onto IYB constructions. On the other hand, FUNCTION, \*UNCONTROLLABLE, SUBJECT<sub>you</sub>, and ROOT are mapped from conditional imperatives onto IYB constructions. Note that ROOT in conditional imperatives realizes as  $ROOT_{be}$  in IYB constructions. Thus, figure 2 successfully captures the fact that IYB constructions inherit properties (42e, i) from conditionals and properties (42b, d, f, g) from conditional imperatives. As is indicated here, CONTEXT, (\*UN)DESIRABLE and \*not in IYB constructions are not linked to either of the two input constructions. These are regarded as emergent properties which give them a separate status. It is these properties together with the inherited properties that make the IYB construction more specific than conditionals and conditional imperatives. This is the whole story of the birth of the IYB construction.

## 5. Possible Alternatives

This section ventures four possible alternatives to the analysis offered in the preceding section and discusses their inviability. The four alternatives share a hypothesis that the IYB construction is related to present subjunctives. First, it might be argued that the IYB construction is not a blended construction but a sort of present subjunctive. It is generally observed, however, that in colloquial *if*-clauses the present subjunctive mood is nearly out of use in present-day English:

- (44) a. The present subjunctive ... is used very occasionally in formal style in open conditional clauses ...: ... More usually, the simple present indicative is used.  
(Quirk et al. (1985:1012))
- b. ... [T]he present subjunctive is nearly obsolete in conditional clauses introduced by *if*, ...  
(James (1986:5))

These observations are based on examples like the following:

- (45) a. \* If it rain tomorrow, I won't go to school.  
b. \*Taro will not go on if his effort not be rewarded.

Therefore, it is unreasonable to assume that the IYB construction is a sort of present subjunctive.

Second, one might assume that conditionals whose *if*-clause is in the present subjunctive mood (hereafter, subjunctive conditionals), as in (45), and imperative conditionals are blended so as to yield the IYB construction. This way of thinking is also untenable because "...the Blends are motivated by the existing basic constructions," as Fauconnier and Turner (1996:127) claim. From this quote, it naturally follows that non-existing constructions are ineligible for inputs. Remember

here that, as the sentences in (45) show, subjunctive conditionals are not acceptable in colloquial English. By definition it is impossible that they serve as one of the two input constructions.

Third, a historical account in terms of CB might be proposed instead of the synchronic one in the preceding section. What seems to support this approach is the fact that present subjunctives had been used very frequently in *if*-clauses until the Early Modern English period. The following is from Early Modern English:

- (46) If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come ... (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.ii.231-233)

This diachronic approach does not face with the problem with the second alternative because, as (46) shows, the subjunctive conditional construction was an attested construction; it was eligible for one of the two input constructions. If we take subjunctive conditionals as one of the two input constructions, and conditional imperatives as the other, the two input constructions have two properties in common: (UN)DESIRABLE and ROOT. If we adopt this historical approach, the whole story would be diagrammed presumably as follows:

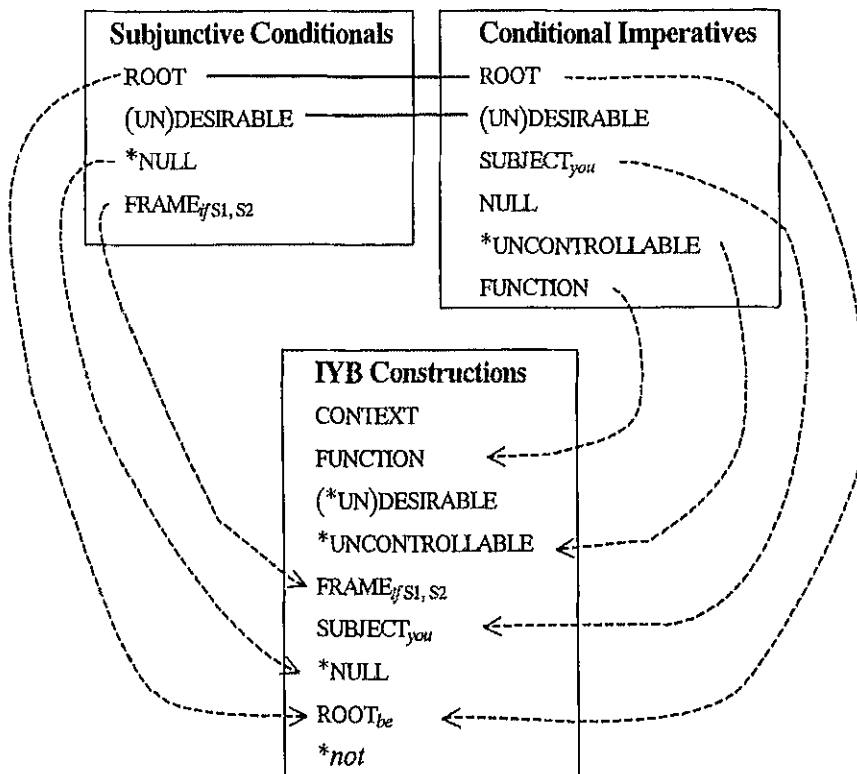


Figure 3.

Apparently, this approach seems plausible, but it is highly doubtful whether it is empirically verifiable. In other words, it is very hard, if not impossible, to historically certify when blending took place. What is worse, we must just imagine the whole story. It is therefore more

substantive to study the IYB construction in relation to those expressions which are now available than in relation to those which are not.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we investigated a certain idiomatic and colloquial expression in present-day English, the IYB construction. It was shown that the IYB construction has a lot of interesting semantic/pragmatic and syntactic properties. We examined whether all of these properties are derived from the other related constructions, i.e. conditionals and conditional imperatives. The comparisons of the IYB construction with those constructions revealed that some of the properties are attributable to them while others are not. We argued that the IYB construction is a blended construction in that it inherits some of its properties from conditionals and conditional imperatives. We also showed that the IYB construction is a separate construction in that it has its own properties. Thus, the IYB construction can be regarded as a blended and separate construction. In order to capture this duality, we proposed CB as the mechanism which creates the IYB construction. CB blends two existing general constructions and consequently yields a new construction. The notion of CB makes it possible to account for how the IYB construction is created in a principled way. The study of the IYB construction here contributes greatly to the study of creativity in language. In this way, we are now in a position to claim that the realm of idiomaticity or, more generally, the peripheral part of a language includes a great deal that is worthy of serious grammatical investigation.

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