Mood

Linguistics 322

Intermediate Syntax

Mood deals with speaker's perception of the reality of a proposition. All propositions must be marked for mood.

The most common mood is the declarative mood also called the indicative mood. Here, the speaker quietly asserts the sentence as being true (factual). Whether or not he is correct is an issue that belongs to real world pragmatics, not grammatical correctness. The indicative mood in not marked in matrix clauses. The complementizer is the category that marks mood. The indicative complementizer is phonetically null in matrix sentences. In embedded sentences it may be marked with that or it may be null. In the following sentences that is a complementizer, not a demonstrative determiner:

(1)   a.   John bought a book.

        b.   *That John bought a book.

        c.   Mary knows John bought a book.

        d.   Mary knows that John bought a book.
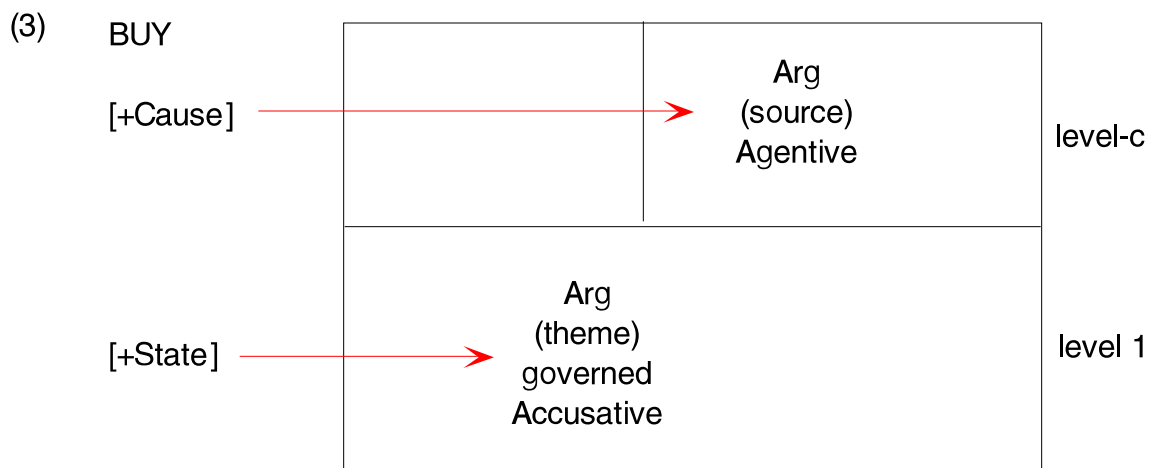
The null variant is possible only when the embedded clause follows the subcategorizing verbs. In other positions, that is required:

(2)   a.   It surprised John that Mary bought a book.

        b.   *It surprised John Mary bought a book.

        c.   That Mary bought a book surprised John.

        d.   *Mary bought a book surprised John.

Mood is assigned the category 'C' (for complementizer). The argument of mood is in old-fashioned syntax S. Here we consider the subject (Prom) to be the syntactic argument
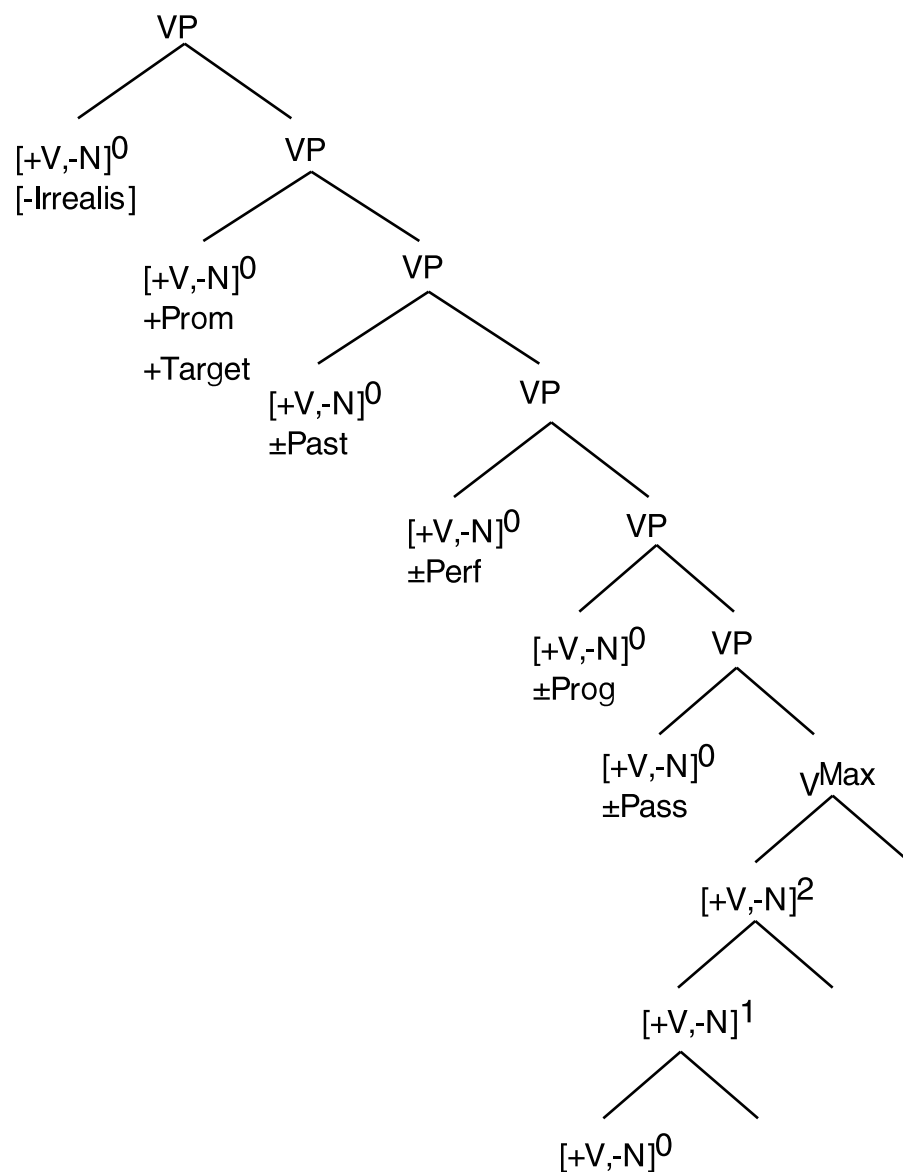
of mood. The indicative (declarative) mood is the default in English (and almost certainly in all natural languages). Mood is an operator modifying the verb phrase to which it is adjoined. The indicative mood is unmarked since it is the default; it is represented by the feature [-Irrealis]. All non-indicative moods are marked by the feature [+Irreal], since they all share the sense of not being realized as extant by the speaker. The feature [-Irreal] means that the speaker is asserting that the argument of [MOOD [-Irreal]] is factor in some sense real.

The argument structure for the main verb BUY in (1a) is (3) based on (9):

(3)   BUY

[+Cause] ———————————→	Arg (source) Agentive	level-c
[+State] ————————→	Arg (theme) governed Accusative	level 1

The base structure for a sentence of English starting with mood is given in(4):

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(4)

$$
\begin{array}{l}
\text{VP} \\
\quad [+V,-N]^0 \quad \text{VP} \\
\quad [-\text{Irrealis}]
\end{array}
$$

The tree structure:

- VP
  - $[+V,-N]^0$ [-Irrealis]
  - VP
    - $[+V,-N]^0$ +Prom +Target
    - VP
      - $[+V,-N]^0$ ±Past
      - VP
        - $[+V,-N]^0$ ±Perf
        - VP
          - $[+V,-N]^0$ ±Prog
          - VP
            - $[+V,-N]^0$ ±Pass
            - $_V$Max
              - $[+V,-N]^2$
                - $[+V,-N]^1$
                  - $[+V,-N]^0$

.The first feature within [+Irreal] that we will analyze is [+Interr]. We consider interrogative sentences to be one of mood--the interrogative mood. In questions, the speaker is seeking information whether the underlying semantic proposition is asserted to be factual by the person(s) he asks. Go to the file on Interrogatives.
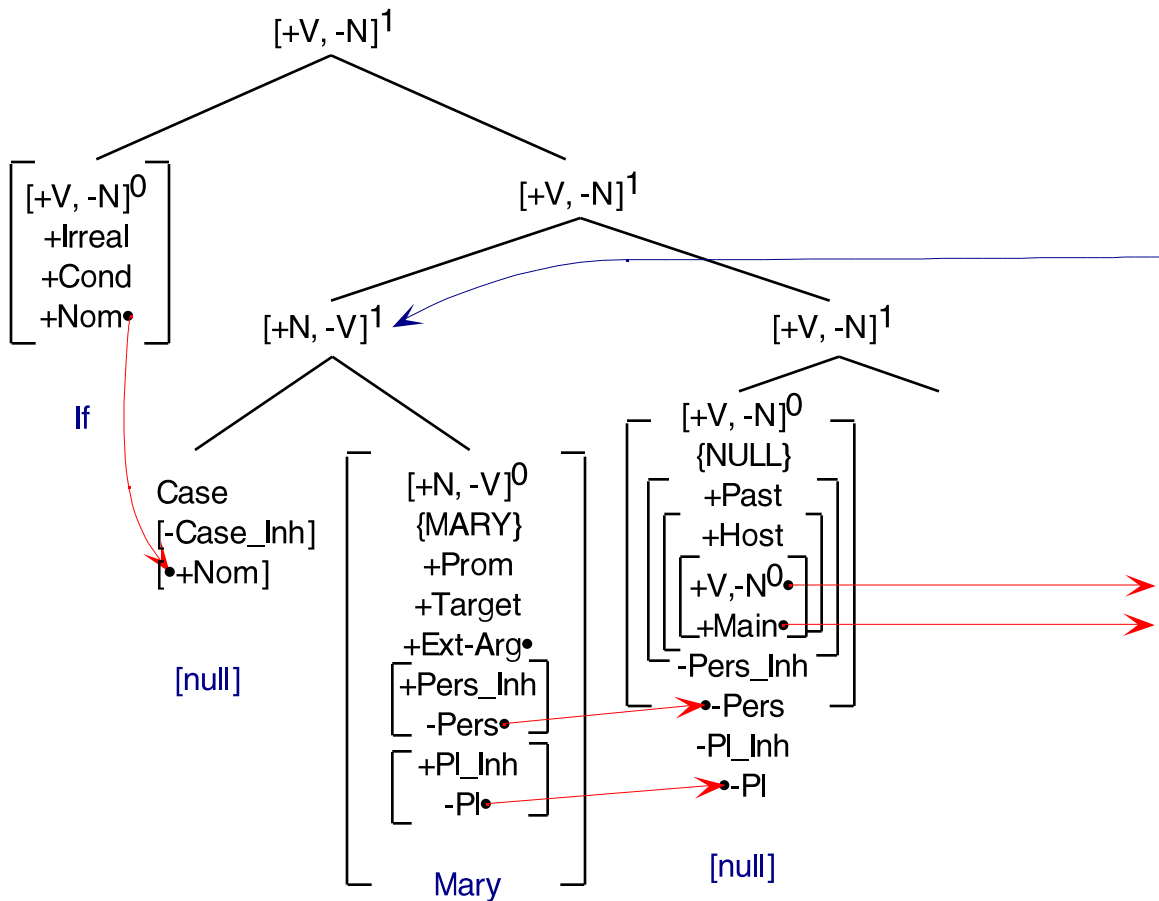
Another common mood is the conditional mood. It occurs in construction with the indicative or the imperative mood. Either clause in this construction is dependent on the conditional clause. The conditional mood is marked with the complementizer *if*. The conditional mood is always an embedded clause. It cannot be a matrix clause. There are two parts to

conditional structure—the condition and the consequence. The consequence is always the matrix clause, which tends to following the conditional clause:

(5)   a.   If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we will go on a picnic.

           b.   If Mary passes syntax, we'll have a party.

           c.   You will get nowhere if you don't study.

           d.   If the stove is turned on, the food will cook.

           e.   If the stove is on, the food must be cooking.

           f.   If it rains later this morning, wear your raincoat when you leave.

           g.   If it is raining, put your raincoat on.

           h.   *If it doesn't rain tomorrow.

The last sentence, (5h), is ungrammatical because there is no consequential clause, which must function as the matrix clause. The phrase marker (tree structure) for (5b) is shown in b(6):

(6)

$[+V, -N]^1$

$\begin{bmatrix} [+V, -N]^0 \\ +Irreal \\ +Cond \\ +Nom \bullet \end{bmatrix}$
If
[null]

$[+V, -N]^1$

$[+N, -V]^1$

$[+V, -N]^1$

$\begin{bmatrix} Case \\ [-Case\_Inh] \\ [\bullet +Nom] \end{bmatrix}$

$\begin{bmatrix} [+N, -V]^0 \\ \{MARY\} \\ +Prom \\ +Target \\ +Ext\text{-}Arg\bullet \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Pers\_Inh \\ -Pers\bullet \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Pl\_Inh \\ -Pl\bullet \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$
Mary

$[+V, -N]^0$

$\begin{bmatrix} [+V, -N]^0 \\ \{NULL\} \\ +Past \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Host \\ \begin{bmatrix} +V, -N^0\bullet \\ +Main\bullet \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \\ -Pers\_Inh \\ \bullet-Pers \\ -Pl\_Inh \\ \bullet-Pl \end{bmatrix}$
[null]

The modal marker will indicating futurity amongst other semantic features does not occur in the conditional when futurity is implied, though the consequential indicative clause is marked with will. The indicative mood implies futurity or it has the reading of an epistemic modal must. The epistemic modal must refers to event that is assumed be true, if the condition upon which it is dependent is true as in (5) above. Whether the food is cooking is dependent on whether the stove is on or off.

The conditional mood may be used in the past tense:

(7)   If it rained yesterday, then they didn't go a picnic.

Here, the speaker does not know whether it rained yesterday.

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An off the shoot is the negative conditional mood. Here, the complementizer is unless:

      (8)   Unless it rains tomorrow, we will go on the picnic.

(8) means

      (9)   If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we will go on the picnic.

Uncertain is the acceptability or grammaticality of Unless-conditionals occurring in the scope of negation:

      (10)   ?Unless it doesn't rain tomorrow, we won't go on the picnic.

The questionability of the sentence arises from the fact that a simple If-conditional conveys the same message, which is easier for the listener to process:

      (11)   (15)   If it rains tomorrow, we won't go on the picnic.

In all probability, sentential negation (polarity) is distinct from lexical negation, which may have its source elsewhere. We will assume this to be the case without elaboration.

The contrary-to-fact mood is also marked by if. The marking becomes complicated because the tense of the verb in the clause is affected. The contrary-to-fact mood refers to a proposition which is not true as far as the speaker is concerned:

      (12)   If John were king, he would eliminate misery.

The us of were with a singular subject marks contrary-to-fact mood amongst those speakers who use it. Other speakers use the normal past tense form:

      (13)   If John was king, we would eliminate misery.

The use of the present tense form here marks the conditional mood:

      (14)   If John is king, then he should be eliminating misery.

In the former sentence, John is not a king. In the latter, it is uncertain whether he is a king, but in the event that is one, the speaker is assuming that he eliminating misery.

If the contrary-to-fact proposition occurs in the logical past tense, the pluperfect construction must b e used:

(15)	If John had been king (when he was alive), he would have eliminated misery.

In this sentence John was never a king.

There is still another mood:

(16)	Molly doesn't know whether to go to her final exam.

I'm not familiar with a name for this mood in the literature. It does seem to point to indecisiveness:

(17)	Molly is undecided whether to go to her final exam.

Let us temporarily call it the *indecisive* mood. This mood as the interesting properly of not assign the nominative case to its complement. Note that there is no subject for the embedded indecisive clause. The expected subject should be *she*, referring back to *Molly*:

(18)	*Molly is undecided whether she to go to her final exam.

There is an interesting correlation here. If the complementizer cannot assign [+Nom], then is subcategorizes an infinitive or, perhaps, some other tenseless clause.

The imperative mood refers to a command. In matrix sentence the imperative mood is not marked by an overt complementizer; it is null. Tense and aspect are absent in imperative clauses. Sentence intonation is the key marker:

(19)	a.	Go to the store!

	b.	Be good!

	c.	Do that!

In embedded clauses, the complementizer than marks the imperative mood. Tense and aspect are also absent:

(20)   a.   I demand that you be home at 9.

           b.   She insisted that he be a fool at the party.
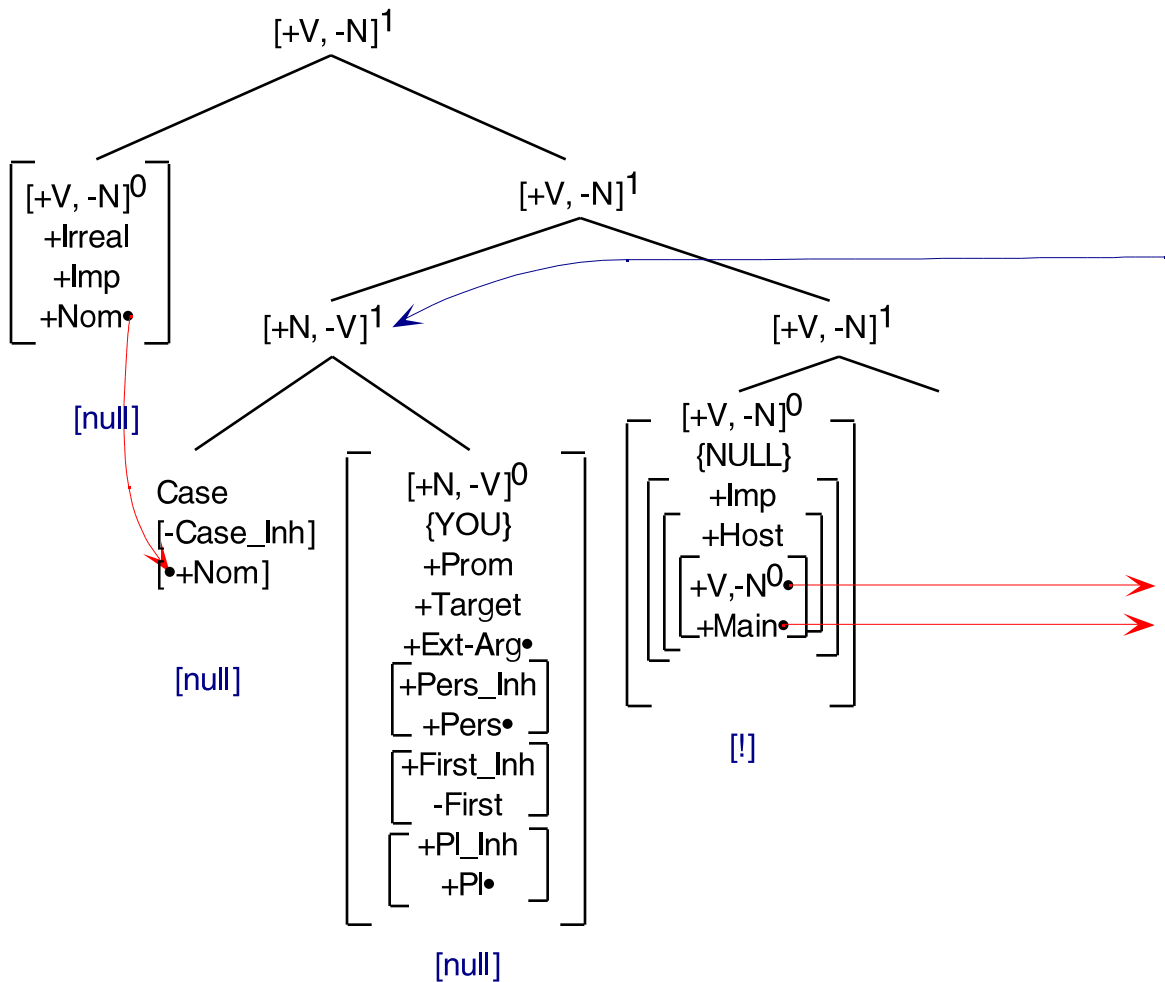
The negative imperative is always formed with the dummy auxiliary verb *do*:

(21)   a.   Don't go to the store!

           b.   Don't be good!

           c.   Don't do that!

To formalize the imperative, we need to posit the feature [+Imp] for the imperative mood. Like T (see tense and aspect) Imp requires a host. If lowering is not blocked Imp lowers and adjoins to V. It has no morphological form in English, but it does affect the sentence intonation pattern. [+Imp]. The imperative needs a main verb as a host as shown in Figure (19a):

(22)

$[+V, -N]^1$

$\begin{bmatrix} [+V, -N]^0 \\ +Irreal \\ +Imp \\ +Nom\bullet \end{bmatrix}$ $[+V, -N]^1$

[null]

$[+N, -V]^1$ $[+V, -N]^1$

Case
[-Case_Inh]
[$\bullet$+Nom]

[null]

$\begin{bmatrix} [+N, -V]^0 \\ \{YOU\} \\ +Prom \\ +Target \\ +Ext\text{-}Arg\bullet \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Pers\_Inh \\ +Pers\bullet \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} +First\_Inh \\ -First \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Pl\_Inh \\ +Pl\bullet \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$

[null]

$\begin{bmatrix} [+V, -N]^0 \\ \{NULL\} \\ +Imp \\ \begin{bmatrix} +Host \\ \begin{bmatrix} +V,\text{-}N^0\bullet \\ +Main\bullet \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$

[!]

The feature [+Imp] is spelled out as "!" representing the imperative intonation contour. Spelling out of the imperative intonation and other intonation contours is relegated to the phonological component. In the negative imperative, the operator [+Neg] first lowers to [+Imp]. There it blocks the lowering of [+Imp] to V. Being stranded, [+Imp] requires a host. The main verb cannot raise [+Imp]. Hence, the dummy auxiliary verb do is inserted to function as the host by Last Resort:

The hortative mood refers to a plea; it is not a command. It is often confused with the imperative mood because both are formed the same in English, although the hortative is often formed with dummy auxiliary verb do in the affirmative:

(23)   a.   Do go to the store!

           b.   Do be good!

           c.   Do do that!

In the negative there is no difference.

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