

## Episode 54 Transcript

Andrew: Hi there. Welcome back to the Art of Business English. Andrew here again, with my colleague, Abel. How you doing, buddy?

Abel: Fine, thank you. It's my pleasure again.

Andrew: Yeah, welcome back. Basically, last week we covered in episode ... I think it was episode 53.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: We covered wishes and regrets, a bit of grammar there. I was talking to Abel, and he thought it would be a good idea to come back onto the show and just to go over the conditionals. We did discuss the conditionals in the last episode. We made contrast between the similarities between wishes and regrets and the second and third conditional.

As a continuation from last week's episode, we thought we would just clarify and go over the different conditionals, just so that everyone's clear. If you haven't looked at episode 53, then go back, take a look, and that'll be a great context for today's episode, as well.

What we'll be covering today is, we're going to look at all the conditionals. So, we're looking at zero conditional first, second, third, and then we'll look at some mixed conditionals which can maybe be a little bit confusing for learners.

I can't express enough how important conditionals are. We use them a lot in business. They're essential for when you're negotiating, for example, and we use them a lot in meetings. Actually, we use them a lot throughout all of our speech in many, many, many areas. You can use them in your writings, in your e-mails, meetings, negotiations, in your presentations. So, it's incredibly important that we understand how to use them correctly.

So, I'm going to be looking to Abel's experience and advice today as we go over the various conditionals.

So, Abel, where would you like to start?

Abel: First I would like to make a reminder, or to remind of the different types of conditionals we have in English, but before that, I would like to make a comparison between conditionals in English and conditionals in other languages.

Andrew: Okay, let's try and keep the focus on Spanish.

Abel: Yes. Conditionals in languages like Spanish for example, are verbs forms that are conjugated, but in English conditionals, or what we call if clauses or if sentences actually, are two part sentences. Which means that one part is the if clause and the other part is the main clause or sometimes we call it the consequence clause, because this main clause is a result of actually the if clause.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: The main conditionals or the main four conditionals in English are conditional zero or zero conditional, conditional type one or the first conditional, conditional type two or the second conditional, and conditional type three or the third conditional. We also have other conditionals, but that are rarely used. For example, what we call mixed conditionals.

First, we are going to talk about the form of each conditional before we talk about its usage in English.

When it comes to zero conditional, for instance, the form is, if + present simple, and the if clause, and then we have the present simple in the main clause or the consequence clause. Here I will give you an example to understand this conditional better. For instance, when we say, "If the price of a product falls, demand usually rises for this product".

Andrew: Yeah, okay. Falls? So, you've got falls and rise?

Abel: Yes. So here actually we are talking about something that is almost always true.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: Also, we use this conditional when we talk about facts. For example, we would say, "if you heat ice, it melts." It means that it's always a fact that whenever ice gets, for example, heated, then it becomes a liquid.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: So, this is something that never changes for instance.

Andrew: Yeah. Same as water. If you heat water to one hundred degrees[crosstalk 00:05:17], it boils.

Abel: Exactly. It boils, yes.

Andrew: These are true facts, or things that we generally accept to be true, and if you look at the structure, the verb in the if clause and the verb in the consequent or the result clause, they're both in the present simple. So if you heat, melt. Okay. Or if you heat, boils.

Abel: Exactly.

Andrew: If prices decrease, then demand goes up.

Abel: Or rises.

Andrew: Rises. Okay good.

Abel: That's right.

So, this is what we call conditional zero. Now, why do we call it conditional zero? Because actually this is not a real conditional sentence. It looks like a conditional sentence because of the if clause. If you heat ice, it melts. But, if here can be replaced by when, and then the meaning would be the same. So, when you say, "when you heat ice it melts", actually the meaning doesn't change. And when we have a sentence with "when" it has nothing to do with a conditional sentence, because actually that's not a real conditional sentence.

Andrew: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Abel: That's why we call it conditional zero or zero conditional.

Andrew: Okay, good. So, the first one then.

Abel: Okay, the first conditional then. Let's move on to conditional type one or the first conditional.

I will start here by introducing the form. The form is "if + present simple and the if clause" and then the future simple or will + the big infinitive in the consequence clause. For instance, if I say, "If the government raises taxes in the next budget (so this is the if clause), consumer capacity will decrease", for instance.

Andrew: So, consumer spending?

Abel: Or consumer spending, yeah.

Andrew: Will decrease.

Abel: Yeah. Consumer spending will decrease.

So here, actually what we need to look at, what we need to focus on is always the if clause. This means that we know in advance, for instance, that the government has decided to raise taxes in the next budget. So, we say that the consequence will be the fact that consumer spending will decrease. So, we use this conditional when we talk about high probability of something happening in the future based on a fact in the present time, or at the time of speaking.

Okay?

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: So, another thing we need to know about the first conditional is that we can, for example, instead of using the form future simple in the main clause or the consequence clause, we can sometimes use mother verbs or we can use the imperative form.

Andrew: Yeah, that's what I was going to say. We can use the imperative form.

Abel: Yes. Yes, it's possible, but here we need to know that it will always be different. Especially when it comes to probability. For example, when you say, "If there's too much traffic, I may be late."

Andrew: Yeah, I may be late.

Abel: Yes. So here I'm not sure if there's going to be some traffic on the way, for example, to work, but in case there's too much traffic there is a probability, that I will be late.

Andrew: And if, for example very common, if you're in the office, you might say to a colleague, "are you going downstairs?"

"Yes, I'm going to get a coffee."

"All right, if you see John, tell him to come and see me"

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: So, tell him is the imperative. It's very common to say use this structure; "if you see someone, then tell them to do something or tell them to call me or tell them to come and see me."

Abel: That's right.

Andrew: That's an example of common use with the imperative.

What else should we cover?

Abel: Well, here for example, we can use unless instead of if. Unless means if not.

Andrew: Let me give you an example with unless.

Abel: Yeah.

Andrew: Yeah.

Unless this report is on my desk by the end of the week, there will be problems.

Abel: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yeah, for instance, yes.

Andrew: We can use that to threaten someone.

Abel: Yeah, that's true.

Andrew: Yeah.

Unless we make some drastic changes to our marketing campaign, we won't meet our sales objective.

Abel: That's right. That's right.

Andrew: Okay.

I like it. Unless is common, isn't it?

Abel: Yes. Unless is common in both written and spoken English actually.

Andrew: Yeah. Yeah.

Abel: Also, when it comes to the first conditional, is that instead of using if, we can use in case, we can use provided.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a great one. I like provided.

Abel: Provided.

Andrew: We teach that a lot on our negotiation courses.

Abel: Yes, provided that or providing, and as long as actually are to replace if. When we want to emphasize the condition...

- Andrew: Yeah, exactly.
- Abel: For example, when I say to you, "I won't sign this contract unless you give me a commission rate of 15%."
- Andrew: Yeah, or provided.
- Abel: Provided you give me a commission rate of 15%, I will sign this contract.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Abel: So, this mean's only if you give me, for example, this condition, that I will sign this contract.
- Andrew: Sign the contract, exactly.
- Providing you give us a 10% discount, we will move forward with the contract.
- Abel: That's right.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Abel: So, the most important thing to know about "provided that, providing, and as long as" is that we use these structures to replace "if" only when we want to emphasize the condition.
- Andrew: Yeah, which is very important and useful when we're negotiating important contracts or conditions in a meeting with someone.
- Abel: Yes. Yes.
- Andrew: Okay, so that covers the zero and the first. Now actually the first we are using for true things, scientific facts, or things that are generally accepted to be true. It's the simple present and the simple present. The first conditional is quite probable. The outcome will occur or the result will happen, if the first condition is met. So, we use the present simple and then the result clause or the consequence is either will or imperative, or we can also use modal verbs such as may. Okay?
- Abel: That's fine.
- Andrew: Let's move on then to the second.
- Abel: Now, let's move on to the second conditional or conditional type two, so the form is, if + simple and the if clause, and then we have would + bare infinitive in the consequence clause or in the main clause.

Andrew: So, we're using simple past?

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: And the second clause is would...

Abel: Would + the bare infinitive.

Andrew: So, a conditional?

Abel: Yes. Exactly.

So, when it comes to usage, we use conditional type two in English. When we talk about low probability or zero probability

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: I'll give you an example to illustrate these two cases.

When we talk about low probability, for example, I say "if the government didn't raise taxes, consumer spending.... Oh sorry, you can cut this one.

Andrew: Yeah, no we'll cut this one. [inaudible 00:13:29]

Abel: For low probability, I will give this example [crosstalk 00:13:32] based on the fact, for example, that the government didn't agree to raise taxes.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: Okay so I say if the government raised taxes in the next budget, consumer spending would decrease.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: So here actually we have low probability because I base my statement on the fact that the government is unlikely to raise taxes in the next budget.

When it comes to zero probability, for example, what you need to know is that zero probability means hypothesizing. Talking about things that are not real and real situations. So here, we just hypothesized.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: For example, you say, "If I were a bird, I would fly." Or "If I could fly, I would travel the world." Is that possible to happen? Of course not, so we are talking zero probability situations here.

Andrew: Yeah. So, this is a great one though for hypothesizing.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: In meetings or in situations, for example, you could say, "If we were market leaders, then we would have a lot of external pressure."

Abel: That's right.

Andrew: If we were more dynamic as a company, we would have more clients.

So, you hear in this situation, you can hypothesize about desired outcomes or undesired outcomes. For example, if we were faster on our feet, then we would be able to react to changes in the market.

So, you can use these in your meetings, or in your presentations, to demonstrate things that you would like to happen that maybe aren't true now.

You can use, in presentations it's quite powerful, this hypothesizing. You can say, "If I were to tell you ..., would you believe me?" Or "if I were to tell you that the number of people blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." You bring in a statistic, then you can say, "would you accept that?"

So, what you can do is you can set people up with ideas. You can introduce these hypothetical concepts, and then from then, what you're able to do is generate in the minds of your audience, a desired outcome or a desired thought that you would like them to adopt.

So, it's quite a powerful tool when you are presenting or when you're in a negotiation with your customers.

Let me think of on for negotiation. You could generally ask your potential client what they would like. "If I were to give you a further 5% discount, would that be enough to make you accept this proposal?"

So, you're hypothesizing, but really what you're actually doing is moulding the outcome. You are trying to put this anticipation into the mind of your listener, the mind of the person whose there. So that when you get to the would you part, then the outcome is either yes, if you want a positive outcome, or no if you're wanting a negative response to the question.

You can use this quite powerfully in many situations to set up an outcome, a hypothetical outcome that you would like.

That is the power of the second conditional.

Would you like to say anything else about the second conditional?

Abel: Actually, you have said enough. I think that's all to say about conditional type two, and now, let's move on to conditional type three.

The form is "if + past perfect" in the if clause, and then we have route + have + the past participle in the consequence clause or in the main clause.

Andrew: Yeah, so can I just elaborate on that?

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: I think sometimes the third conditional can be a bit confusing. So just so we're clear, the past perfect is when we use a subject. The past participle form, I'm sorry, the past simple form of the verb have, but we use it as auxiliary, so it's had. So, subject + had + the past participle form of the verb. If I had seen, or if I had spoken, or if I had bought. So, you need to make sure you remember the third column, here it's very important. Especially of the irregular verbs. And then the second clause would be with what we call conditional perfect. Would have and then the third column or the past participle form of the verb; so, could have done, would have done, should have done; those are some really simple structures.

What's important to know here, especially in relation to Spanish, is that lots of the forms with the conditionals, and I think we spoke about this last week, they are subjunctive forms. Once you've got the relationship between the two, for example, (Spanish [00:19:03]) I think that's the conditional form of this third conditional. Also, the subjunctive form of this third conditional.

The point is, you can't think in subjunctive form, you just need to memorize the structures in English, which are quite simple. Everyone knows the past perfect. It's generally an easy structure to replicate. Once you start getting quite fluid with this conditional perfect, it's really simple, quite rolls off the tongue. Would have done, should have done, could have done. It seems complicated in the beginning, but once you start practicing it in your mind, it starts to really roll off your tongue. It's quite a liberating experience, and it's quite a refreshing jump in your linguistic knowledge and your ability to express, when you are able to master and feel comfortable using the third conditional.

Suddenly it opens up a whole range of reflections that you can make on situations that happened in the past. And now Abel is going to elaborate on how we use the third conditional.

Abel: Yes, when it comes to the usage, we use this conditional in English. When we talk about the past saying it's impossible to change it, we might, for example, express our desire in the past over things that happened in a way that we didn't like them to happen, for example, but now it's too late, we cannot change that.

For instance, imagine that the government raised taxes. It's too late to object to that. For instance, if I say, "If the government hadn't raised taxes, that wouldn't have an impact on the consumer spending." So, this means that the government raised taxes and there has been an impact now on the consumer spending. But can we change this situation? Of course not, so we are talking about a hypothesis in the past that could have changed, for example, the current situation, which is actually impossible.

Andrew: Yeah. So, it's important to note with these examples, for example, it can sound weird to say, "have had", for example, "if the government hadn't raised taxes, then we wouldn't have had a negative impact on consumer spending."

Just be careful when you're using that, because it's going to sound a bit weird to say, "have had had or have had". So, would have had is weirder (Spanish [00:22:02]). Okay? Now it sounds a bit strange to put have and then had together, but we're using have with is the auxiliary [Spanish 00:22:13], and then we're using had, which is the third column of the past participle form of the verb have.

So that can sometimes confuse people, but once you get the hang of it, as I said before, it starts to roll off your tongue. If you could say to your boss, imagine you're reporting back on the outcome of a negotiation, you could say to your boss, "look, if I hadn't given the client a further 5% discount, they wouldn't have signed the contract." Okay, so you can reflect back, as I was saying before, and show or demonstrate different alternative realities. You can say, "look, I'm sorry that this deal is not as powerful, or I'm sure this deal is not as good as you had expected," okay, "but, if I hadn't of given them a further 5% discount, then we would have lost the contract."

So, you can use it here to demonstrate and elaborate things that would have happened, except for the condition. So, we put the condition in and then we create this alternative reality.

You can use it positively. You could say, "Oh luckily, if I hadn't given them a 10% discount, they would have cancelled their contract with us."

You can use it both ways. You can use it to defend a negative outcome. You can use it to show the positive situation that did occur, and then contrast the negative situation that would have occurred if we hadn't taken this decision or there hadn't of been this condition in place.

So, it's very important that you understand the third conditional because it opens up a whole range of linguistic possibilities for you in business to be able to contrast; and when we contrast things, particularly with presentations, using contrast is a powerful way to motivate people to do things, because when they can see the pain point, then you can present the positive or the comfortable side of things. Okay?

So again, knowing the third conditional is very helpful in persuading people and demonstrating a range of outcomes that could have happened if this condition was met. And I just might add as well, you can see what I'm doing here. What's interesting about the if conditional, and Abel did mention this last week, is that you can change the order in English. You can put the result clause first. So, you can say, "We would have lost the contract if I hadn't given them the further discount." Okay? So, it's very flexible in the way we use it, and if you're good with your linguistic skills, you can really change the order to focus on specific things.

Do you want to focus on more on the condition or the outcome? And we can put them one first, or the other one second, or we can switch them up. Now, when we're speaking orally, there's no comma obviously; but when we're writing, make sure that if the if clause comes first, we need to put a comma between these two clauses. Obviously when you're speaking, you don't need to see that.

That's the third conditional, isn't it?

Abel: Yeah, that's right.

Andrew: Yeah.

What about mixed then?

Abel: Yes, sometimes we use another form of conditionals that we call mixed conditionals. For instance, if I say, "If you had paid the bills, you wouldn't be in the dark now." So here as you see in the if clause, we have if + past perfect, and then in the main clause or the consequence clause, we have would + the infinitive, which means that part of it looks like the clause we use in conditional type three and the second part is the clause we use in conditional two. That's why we have this mixed conditional.

Andrew: So just a question, sorry to interrupt you....

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: What type of mixes can we make? Here, you're saying the third conditional with the second.

Abel: Yes.

- Andrew: What other types of combinations?
- Abel: Sometimes, the second with the third too. But usually it's the third with the second.
- Andrew: Okay.
- Abel: For instance, but we need to understand when we can do that.
- Andrew: Okay. Yeah. Elaborate on that then.
- Abel: Yes, so we use mixed conditionals, for example, the example I have just said, when we talk about statements that are still valid actually, or situations that are still valid at the time of speaking.
- So, I come to your place and I find you in the dark for instance, and I say, "What's wrong?" And you say, "well they cut my service because I didn't pay the bills," and I said, "if you had pay all the bills, you wouldn't be," why you wouldn't be. Because this situation is still valid as consequence at the time of speaking.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Abel: That's why I cannot say, "you wouldn't have been," because if I say you wouldn't have been in the dark, it means that maybe the problem is already solved.
- Andrew: Yeah. Okay. So, it's true now in the present.
- Abel: Exactly.
- Andrew: So, can you give us an example of the other way when it's the second conditional contrasted with the third?
- Abel: For instance, I would say, "I would be on holiday now if I hadn't had surgery on my back."
- Andrew: Okay. Exactly.
- Abel: So yeah.
- Andrew: So, you did have the surgery and you would be on holiday now, but you're not.
- Abel: Exactly.
- Andrew: So, the situation is true in the present.

Abel: In the present, because yeah, that's what I'm living. I'm living the fact that, okay I can't be on holiday right now.

Andrew: Yeah, because you've had surgery.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: In the past.

Abel: Absolutely.

Andrew: Okay, that's a way to mix up the second conditional coming first and then the third conditional, or the third conditional coming first and then the second conditional coming second.

Abel: Exactly.

Andrew: Okay, so again we can change the order up a little bit.

Abel: Yes.

Well I think we have covered the main four conditionals...

Andrew: Yep.

Abel: And we have talked about two examples of mixed conditionals. We have talked about some special cases. When we use, for example; provided that, providing, or as long as instead of if.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: Especially when we want to emphasize the condition...

Andrew: The condition, yeah.

Abel: The meaning would be here, if only. Okay? If, okay? Say it means okay only with this condition something would happen for instance.

Andrew: Yeah. I like provided that.

Abel: Another key thing I would like to add before we finish is some common mistakes.

Andrew: Yeah, that's probably a good idea! Lots of students make mistakes with this.

Abel: For instance, students sometimes [crosstalk 00:29:03], yes, they use will, for example, in the if clause. They say, "If you will come early tomorrow, we will go to the beach."

Andrew: Actually here, you can choose will come. Okay?

Abel: Yeah.

Andrew: So, if you come, so if past present simple...

Abel: And then when it refers to the future.

Andrew: Do you think that is because of the subjunctive form?

Abel: It's because of the language.

Andrew: Yeah, I think so.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: I'd like to elaborate on that, because we see that a lot with when. Okay.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: When is followed by a subjunctive form, so [Spanish 00:29:38], so people would say, all right, "when you have finished this", it's in the future, because you will finish it in the future. So naturally, because it's [Spanish 00:29:50], because it's a subjunctive form, students naturally think that it's a future because it's going to be finished in the future. So, they say, "when you have finished this," and I think it's similar to what you're talking about with the conditions as well....

Abel: Yes. Exactly.

Andrew: Because the issue arises from the first conditional where people are thinking that the action's going to happen in the future, so they just put will, when in fact they should be using the simple present.

That's what I mentioned before. You need to avoid thinking too much in Spanish about how these structures are formed, because they're quite, in all honesty for me as a non-native Spanish speaker, the if conditionals forms are quite confusing, because you need to understand all of the subjunctive conjugations that occur. Whereas with English, it's just memorizing the patterns, okay.

The first conditional is present simple and the result clause is the future will imperative or may, for example. So, you just have to remember these strict rules

because they don't really change. I mean, you can have mixed conditionals, but these structures never change. So, don't start modifying them based on what you think, okay? You just need to memorize them.

As Abel said, don't put the future in the first conditional because it goes in the second clause, in the result clause, not in the first clause. Okay?

What other mistakes are common?

Abel: Another mistake is at the level of conditional type two.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: Sometimes students might get confused when they find, for example, while reading a text, would in the if clause. And as we have said, when we talk about conditional type two, the form is "if + past simple" in the if clause and then "would + the infinitive" in the consequence clause. But sometimes we use or we can use would in the if clause, not because we are talking about conditional sentence here, because, okay, or for politeness purposes. For example, you go to a company, and then the secretary receives you saying, "if you would follow me, we'll see the director." So here, actually, the use of would has nothing to do with a conditional sentence. So, the use of would here is simply for politeness purposes.

Andrew: Yeah. If you would, if you might, if you may.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: Okay. So, any more mistakes then?

Abel: Well, I would like to add that sometimes we use in case and so that, actually to replace if.

Abel: For example, you say, "I'll reserve the room from 3 to 9 in case the meeting goes on for a long time for instance.

Andrew: Goes overtime. Okay.

Yeah.

Abel: So, in case is used here as a measure of precaution or safety to prevent some problem from happening, and this problem is the problem of having a very long meeting. So, in case the meeting goes on a long time, I have reserved or I've reserved the room from 3 to 9, for instance. But this doesn't mean that the problem will be prevented.

Andrew: Yeah.

Abel: This is just a measure or precaution that we take into consideration, just in case.

Andrew: Yeah. Probably.

Abel: Exactly.

But we can also use "so that," and here actually the idea is not only to make a precaution but especially to get to an objective, because we use so that in English when we talk about purpose. So, when we say, "I reserved the room from 3 to 5 so that we, or so that the meeting doesn't go on for a long time." This means that I have limited the time to prevent the problem, and the problem will definitely be prevented here.

Andrew: Yeah.

So that's expressing purpose?

Abel: Exactly.

Andrew: Okay.

Abel: The purpose, designed to benefit some or to prevent some problem.

Andrew: Okay. Well, that is pretty clear, I think.

Abel: Yes.

Andrew: I think we've covered lots of, lots of aspects of the conditionals in English. I don't think you'd get much more of a detailed explanation than that. I hope that the information and the examples that we provided have shown you how important the conditionals can be linguistically when you are using your English in business and other areas of life, and I'd just like to thank you very much for coming Abel.

Abel: My pleasure.

Andrew: And I'd like to remind everyone that you can subscribe for the Art of Business English at [www.theartofbusinessenglish.com/subscribe](http://www.theartofbusinessenglish.com/subscribe), there you can join our e-mail list where, and you'll get weekly updates from us, straight to your inbox, free every week. You will also be able to subscribe to us on iTunes, on Stitcher, or on Spotify. So, go over and have a look at the website. If you're not already a member, or if you're not already subscribed to The Art of Business English, then do so, you will not be disappointed. And I hope you've all had a good session and benefited from our knowledge on that topic of conditionals.



Abel, thank you very much for joining me here.

Abel: You're welcome. My Pleasure.

Andrew: And we'll see you all next week guys on The Art of Business English. Bye for now.