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### Author
Ishihara, Noriko

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# "*I Wish I Would Have Known!*": The Usage of *Would Have* in Past Counterfactual *If-* and *Wish*-Clauses

Noriko Ishihara
University of Minnesota

*Although grammar has long established its position in ESL curricula, discrepancies between forms used in actual speech and their prescribed counterparts are problematic. ESL textbooks sometimes fail to reflect authentic grammar use, thus raising questions as to how nonstandard usages should be treated in the classroom. This paper describes native English speakers' usage of* would have *in past counterfactual* if- *and* wish-*clauses in spoken discourse and examines acceptability judgments of this usage in an informal written dialogue. In this study the* would have *variant was widely used and accepted by the participants. The paper argues that ESL pedagogical materials should descriptively address the* would have *usage, which is potentially unconscious even among ESL instructors. The paper further explores plausible hypotheses accounting for the prevalent and stable usage of* would have *in violation of prescriptive rules. Practical suggestions are also presented regarding testing policies involving the* would have *usage on standardized tests.*

This study explores native English speakers' usage and perception of the modal perfect *would have* + *-en* in past counterfactual *if-* and *wish*-clauses as in:

(1) If I *would have* known, I would have told you.
(2) I wish I *would have* studied harder.

Reference grammars typically prescribe the past perfect in such past counterfactual constructions as in the following example:

(3) If I *had* (not *would have*) *known*, I would have told you.
(Greenbaum & Whitcut, 1993, p. 779)

However, native speakers of English often use the proscribed modal *would* in the *if*-clauses, as a number of native speakers of English did in this study:

(4) If I'*d have known* she was ill, I'd have called her.

Few references provide a comprehensive picture of this discrepancy as to the usage of *would have* in *if-* and *wish*-clauses. Is there a distinction between the modal perfect and past perfect? Is this a widespread or regional usage? Is it a recent phenomenon? Is it possible to pinpoint what leads speakers to use *would have* + *-en* as opposed to *had* + *-en* in past counterfactuals? The main purposes of this study

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are to document native English speakers' usage of *would have* in speech, to probe their perception of past counterfactual structures in spoken dialogue, and to compare the findings with descriptions of the past counterfactual in the literature.

Although *if*- and *wish*-clauses are two separate structures, they are related. For example, *wish*-clauses occasionally function like *if*-clauses as in:

> (5) I wish I had known you were in trouble. Then, I could have helped you.

These two structures share at their roots an identical issue with regard to tense and modality, and therefore, are discussed together in a number of sections in this article. Prescriptive grammars proscribe the use of *would have*, as in (1), (2), and (4). However, daily experience shows us that this usage of *would have* occurs, sometimes more frequently than (3) and (5).

For descriptions of the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses, two major bodies of literature have been consulted. The first includes dictionaries, college/writing handbooks, reference grammars, and ESL/EFL textbooks which guide students preparing to take such gatekeeping tests as the TOEFL and Cambridge EFL exams. The second includes research articles, which provide diachronic and synchronic perspectives on the usage of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses. This paper further explores plausible hypotheses accounting for the prevalent and stable usage of *would have* in violation of prescriptive rules, hypotheses which have been proposed in past studies and confirmed through participant/ informant contributions in this study. Additionally, testing policies in standardized tests regarding language varieties, including the usage of *would have,* were researched with the cooperation of Educational Testing Services and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. Practical suggestions will be presented as to the way the usage of *would have* can be taught and tested.

## GRAMMATICAL RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS OF PAST COUNTERFACTUAL *WOULD HAVE* VS. *HAD* IN *IF*-CLAUSES

Thirty-four sources were consulted for descriptions of the past counterfactual *if*-clause; these included dictionaries, college/writing handbooks, a grammar check function of a word processing software program, reference grammars, and ESL/EFL textbooks. The vast majority (28 sources) either condemned the *would have* usage in subordinate clauses or completely excluded it from mention. Sixteen sources[1] were found to have no reference to *would have* in subordinate clauses. For example, *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, pp. 551-552) only mentions the past perfect structure for the past counterfactual conditional using *if*.

(6) *if* + past perfect, *would have* V + *-en*
If my grandfather had still been alive in 1996, he would have been 100 years old.

This description of the construction as requiring the past perfect in *if*-clauses was consistent among every resource that excluded the usage of *would have* in *if*-clauses.

Twelve[2] sources prescribe past perfect and also explicitly condemn the *would have* usage in *if*-clauses. The *would have* usage is characterized as "nonstandard" (Evans & Evans, 1957, p. 558), or described as a structure appearing "only in informal speech" that should be avoided (Alexander, 1998, p. 280). The other ten sources prohibit the *would have* usage without offering any explanation or comment. For instance, the grammar check function in Microsoft's (2000) word-processing program evaluates *would have* in *if*-clauses as incorrect, and suggests the past perfect as an alternative "correct" structure.

(7) If I would have gone to college right after high school, I would have graduated sooner.
Microsoft Word suggestion: had

The college/writing handbooks that mention *would have* in past counterfactual *if*-clauses consistently prohibit the *would have* usage (Fowler & Aaron, 1998, p. 229; Lunsford & Connors, 1999; Whitcut, 1994). *Harbrace College Handbook* (Hodges & Whitten, 1977, 1982; Hodges, Whitten, Horner, & Webb, 1990) and the later edition *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook* (Horner, Webb, & Miller, 1998) all warn against using *would have* in place of the past perfect in past counterfactual *if*-clauses:

(8) Caution: Do not use *would have* as a substitute for *had*.
If you **had** (NOT ***would have***) *arrived* earlier, you would have seen the president (Hodges & Whitten, 1982, p. 94).

In fact, *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* states that the *would have* usage has been cited as an error in books on usage since at least 1924 and is a "staple of college handbooks even today" (Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994, p. 966).

An EFL textbook written in Japanese, *TOEFL no Eibunpou* (*English Grammar for the TOEFL*) (Hanamoto, 1987), which claims to base their instructional materials on a thorough investigation of past TOEFL exams, also forbids the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *if*-clauses. In the practice exercise for Section 2 of the TOEFL, *Structure/Written Expression*, *would have* appears in an *if*-clause to be detected as an error.

(9) If you would have studied the problem more carefully, you
(a) (b)
would have found the solution more quickly (p. 120).
(c) (d)

Learners of English who study this material in preparation for the TOEFL, a very common college-level proficiency test in North America, may believe that only the past perfect represents English usage or perhaps the only "correct" usage.

Only six sources[3] out of the 34 consulted take a descriptive approach to the usage of *would have* in counterfactual *if*-clauses, offering varying perspectives. Interestingly, *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (1989) provides examples of *would have* used in past counterfactual *if*-clauses that date back centuries. Among the examples in the dictionary under *if*, Section 3b, *would have* is included in an *if*-clause in Modern English[4] (1500-).

(10) Mod. [Modern English] If he would have consented, all would have been right (1989).

And from the sixteenth century, we find (under *will*, Section 44):

(11) 1594 in *Cath. Rec. Soc. Publ.* [*Catholic Record(s) Society Publication*] V. 293
He converted 5 or 6 felons in the short tyme he was in Newgate, whereof 2 or 3 might have beene reprieved from the gallows, if they would have denied what they had professed there (1989).

Such authentic examples stand counter to the prescriptive rule that *would have* should be avoided in past counterfactual *if*-clauses.

Two of the six sources present the *would have* usage as a stylistic difference between spoken and written English. *Focus on Grammar* for high intermediate learners (Fuchs & Bonner, 1995) characterizes the *would have* usage as a "not preferred written form" (p. 224). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985) states that although the past perfect is used in past counterfactual *if*-clauses, informal spoken American English "may have matching modals in both clauses" as in "If *I'd have* seen her, I*'d have* told her." It also discusses use of "volitional *would*, 'would be willing to,'" and gives the following example:

(12) I *might have married* her if she *would have agreed* (p. 1011).

This volitional use of *would* is also illustrated elsewhere as an exceptional case in which *would* can be used to convey willingness in *if*-clauses.[5]

The remaining four sources provide perhaps the most balanced view of the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *if*-clauses, combining considerations of formality of context with stylistic differences between writing and speech. *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (1994) describes the *if*-clause *would have* usage as occuring in informal speech that often takes a contracted form, *'d have*. It further notes that the *would have* usage does not occur in standard published material (p. 966). *Focus on Grammar* for advanced learners (Maurer, 1995) states that the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *if*-clauses is "not acceptable in formal speaking and writing" (p. 281), implying that it is probably acceptable in an informal context. *Understanding and Using English Grammar* (Azar, 1999) carries a hesitant tone in labeling the native English speakers' *if*-clause *would have* usage in informal speech as "incorrect" as shown in the following:

> (13) In casual, informal speech, some native speakers sometimes use <u>would have</u> in an *if*-clause: *If you <u>would've</u> told me about the problem, I would've helped you*. This verb form usage is generally considered not to be grammatically correct standard English, but it occurs fairly commonly (p. 418).

Although most of the 34 sources consulted for this study either avoid the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *if*-clauses or simply condemn it without giving reasons, the six sources above use a descriptive approach to grammar regarding this structure. While exemplifying real-life usage, which the readers may encounter in authentic interactions, even some of these latter sources warn their audience against the usage, particularly in formal speaking and writing.

## GRAMMATICAL RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS OF PAST COUNTERFACTUAL *WOULD HAVE* VS. *HAD* IN *WISH*-CLAUSES

The usage of *would have* in past counterfactual *wish*-clauses is omitted from mention in the great majority of the 34 resources consulted for this study. Eleven[6] sources do not discuss the counterfactual *wish* structure at all. Nineteen sources[7] recommend the past perfect or *could have* in *wish*-clauses, yet make no reference to *would have*. For instance, the *Longman English Grammar* (Alexander, 1998) clearly spells out the usage of the past perfect for past counterfactual *wish*-clauses without thoroughly discussing any modal usage.[8]

> (14) After *wish*, *if only*, ... we use the **past perfect** tense to refer to **past** time.
> <u>*I wish/If only*</u> you had let me know earlier (pp. 224-225).

Of the four sources which do in fact refer to *would have* in past counterfac-

tual *wish*-clauses, two clearly take a prescriptive stance, prohibiting *would have*. *Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2000) recommends using the past perfect and simply forbids *would have* as follows:

> (15) Use the *past perfect* (I had done) after *wish* when you say that you regret something that happened or didn't happen in the past. You cannot use *would have* after *wish*.
> *I wish* it had been warmer (*not* would have been) (p. 72).

Additional support for this position is offered by the grammar check function in *Microsoft Word 2000* (Microsoft, 2000), which highlights *would have* in *wish*-clauses, giving the past perfect verb form as an alternative suggestion.

Only two other sources, *Understanding and Using English Grammar* (Azar, 1999) and *Practical English Usage* (Swan, 1995) descriptively introduce the *would have* usage in past counterfactual *wish*-clauses. Both Azar and Swan state that the past perfect is preferred in *wish*-clauses, but add that the *would have* form occurs in informal or very informal speech. Swan (1995) says:

> (16) Past perfect tenses are used for wishes about the past.
> *I wish you hadn't said that (=It would be nice if you hadn't said that.)*
> *Now she wishes she had gone to university.*
> In informal speech, sentences like *I wish you'd have seen it* sometimes occur (p. 601).

While describing the usage of *would have* in *wish*-clauses in informal contexts, these two pedagogical grammars avoid discussing its grammaticality. This may simply be due to the lack of established consensus regarding this question among writers on usage, or it may reflect the writers' reluctance to either validate or stigmatize authentic usage.

## RESEARCH ARTICLES ON *WOULD HAVE* IN PAST COUNTERFACTUAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

The previous section established that *would have* is used in *if*- and *wish*-clauses in Modern English (Example 10) but has been condemned in dictionaries and college handbooks for quite some time (e.g., Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994). Research in dialectology and historical linguistics has revealed that widespread use of past counterfactual *would have* in both *if*- and *wish*-clauses has been existent for centuries. Molencki (1998, 2000) and Denison (1998) trace shifting counterfactual forms and meanings from Old English (-1100) to present-day English.[4] In historical analyses, the presence of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*-clauses is demonstrated in language from as far back as the fifteenth century, as

is demonstrated in the following example:

> (17) *&* [=if] *he wolde not a followed me, I wolde haue retourned ageyn ... Whereby I shulde in no wyse haue fallen in this daungier* (Earl Rivers, *The Cordyal* 79, 12 c1479) (as cited in Molencki, 2000, p. 321).

It was used in nineteenth-century novels:

> (18) a. I think if he *would have let* me just look at things quietly... it *would have been* all right (1877 Sewell, *Black Beauty* xxx ix.123) (as cited in Denison, 1998, p. 300).

It continues to be attested in modern written English usage in the news media:

> (19) *He thought that if he would have been able to freeze-dry one of the more attractive men, then he would not have had a desire for the other victims* (*UPI Top Stories,* 1992) (Molencki, 1998, p. 246).

*Would have* in past counterfactual *wish*-clauses is also documented in Molencki (1998, 2000) and Hancock (1993). Molencki's examples date back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He observes that the *would have* usage was extended to semantically related structures such as *wish-* and *as if*-clauses once it was established in *if*-clauses:

> (20) *I wish my mony would have extended itself into a larger maner, for it may be beleft I have but three shillinges to keep me untill our Lady Day.* (Elizabeth Oxinden's letter to her mother, 25 Feb 1666) (as cited in Molencki, 2000, p. 321).

Molencki (1998, 2000) points out that historically *would have* in subordinate clauses has been associated with certain meanings. In Old English, *wolde*, the modern counterpart of *would*, only appears with the volitional meaning, whereas in Middle English volition is less obvious, and early Modern English finds some instances of grammaticalized *would*. Linguists suggest that in present-day English, some element of volition may still be conveyed by *would*. As Denison (1998) contends: "non-standard examples [with bleached *would* in subordinate clauses] are not uncommon, especially where there is some trace of a volitional meaning" (p. 300). Greenbaum and Whitcut (1993) generally forbid *would* and *would have* in counterfactual subordinate clauses except where *would* carries the meaning 'be willing to' (see Note 5). Broughton (1986) even describes the *would have* usage in subordinate clauses as "surely entirely justified, if mildly pedantic" (p. 29).

In present-day English, the socioeconomic and geographical distribution of *would have* in past counterfactual subordinate clauses has been reported to be considerably widespread. Some speculate that the usage of *would have* is "made in America" (Fillmore, 1990, p. 143; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1011) or possibly characteristic of a Midwestern dialect (G. Yule, personal communication, October 17, 2000). While Hancock (1993) draws upon written English examples from contemporary American newspapers dating from the 1970s to the 1990s, Molencki (2000) finds examples of *would have* in subordinate clauses in prestigious newspapers in both the United States and Britain. And of course we have already seen examples from British English (Examples 10, 11). It is also important to note that Hancock's quotes, mainly collected in the eastern part of the United States, come from speakers and writers in wide socioeconomic and geographical distribution: a brain surgeon, government officials, a professor of English, a building manager, and military personnel from east to west coasts.

Additional evidence of the widespread past counterfactual *would have* form in subordinate clauses can be found in electronic listserv communications from the American Dialect Society. One e-mail entry pointed out that *would have* in subordinate clauses is often heard on TV programs, especially *Rescue 911* (A. Lambert, 2000, Feburary 17). Interestingly, this e-mail message triggered heated and prolonged discussion on the listserv. P. Richardson (2000, February 17) responded that *would have* in *if*-clauses is well addressed as problematic in the style manuals and that "it wouldn't have been addressed had a 'problem' not been perceived." Another entry recalled how surprised his students were "to discover that they can say/write 'had had' (*If I had had enough time, ...*)" since students normally use *would have* (*would of*/*wouldda*/*hadda*) *had* (PAT, 2000, Feburary 19).

In contracted form, *would have* is sometimes difficult to distinguish from another modal perfect *had have,* a form morphologically deviant yet clearly attested in the literature (and occasionally referred to as *plupluperfect*). In speech, *I would have* is often contracted to /aidə/ (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1012). The spoken representation of *would have* is spelled as *'d have*, *'d'a*, *'d a*, or *'d of* (Boyland, 1995; Hancock, 1993; Lambert, 1986; Quirk et al., 1985; Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994). Since such contractions are homonymous to those of *had have* (*'d have*), it is impossible to know whether such contractions should be uncontracted as *would have* or *had have* (Fillmore, 1990, p. 153). In fact, these contractions are occasionally interpreted as *had have* rather than *would have*. Some argue that Britons tend to interpret the written contractions as *had have*, whereas Americans normally interpret them as *would have* (Harris, 1984, as cited in Boyland 1995; Lambert, 1986). Jespersen (1942) also gives numerous examples of *'d have*, *'d ha'*, and *'d a* under the section "*had have*." Similarly, Visser (1973) illustrates the *had have* structure in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses, yet does not refer to *would have*. Webster's Dictionary of Enlgish Usage (1994) is inclined to interpret *'d a* in subordinate clauses in American literature as in the following example as *had have*.

(21) ...if we*'d a* left the blame tools at the dead tree we'd a got the money—Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, 1876 (p. 746).

However, it further notes that the reduced *'d a* "from Twain, Galsworthy, and Fitzgerald makes it impossible to be sure that these are not, rather, examples of *would have* and so not the true plupluperfect."

Palmer (1986) uses this formal ambiguity in defense of the British politician Pryor who has been accused of having used the non-standard form *had've* in "If I*'d've* been ..." (p. 29). Palmer maintains that Pryor might have said "If I *would have* been." This argument seems fair in that it is impossible to determine which form a speaker meant to use. Indeed the previous section has established that *would have* has been used in British and American English for centuries, in addition to *had have*.

In summary, in the literature the empirical evidence of the following five different constructions in the *if*-clause has been found to express past counterfactuality.

(22) (a) If ... *had* + past participle (past perfect) (If I *had known*...)
(b) If ... *would have*/*could have* + past participle (modal perfect) (If I *would have known*...)
(c) If ... *had have* + past participle ("plupluperfect") (If I *had have known*...)
(d) If ... simple past (If I *knew*...)[9]
(e) If ... *have* + past participle (If I *have known*...)[10]

While Molencki (1998, 2000), among others, provides evidence for the coexistence of the four constructions (22a-d) in British and American English since the fifteenth century, Hwang (1979) documents the fifth structure (22e) in her corpus study of the present-day English usage. Although these studies on *would have* in past counterfactual subordinate clauses seem to center on written data and written representation of oral sources, the present study attempts to analyze the *would have* usage in oral data produced by native speakers of North American English. Generally books on usage and grammar barely note the use of *would have* in past counterfactual subordinate clauses, but does this practice provide an accurate picture of the way English speakers talk? This study includes a written judgment activity regarding native English speakers' perception of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses. These data are used to address the research question: Do native speakers of English produce and accept as correct the *would have* form in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses?

## STUDY ONE: USE OF PAST COUNTERFACTUAL *WOULD HAVE* IN *IF*- AND *WISH*-CLAUSES IN SPOKEN ENGLISH

### Methodology

*Past Counterfactual* If-*Clauses*

Nine native speakers of American English participated and provided oral data for the past counterfactual *if*-clause. The subjects consisted of both males and females aged 19 to 77, the average being 56, and were of various occupations. The age, gender, and occupation of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

The participants were audiotaped and their past counterfactual sentences were later transcribed. The major body of data was collected at a Thanksgiving dinner in a Minnesota home; other informants were interviewed individually. The participants were asked to come up with conditional example sentences, amusing ones in particular, so that I could use the ideas in teaching ESL students. They were told that they could do this by first thinking of something that happened in the past, and then of what else or how else it might have happened if things had been different. Some examples were given and the participants were encouraged to create their own humorous examples so that they would have to pay attention to the content rather than the form.

*Past Counterfactual* Wish-*Clauses*

For the past counterfactual *wish*-clause, nine native speakers of American English were interviewed individually. Five had various occupations, while the other four were ESL teachers and graduate students in ESL. Oral interviews were audiotaped and the *wish* sentences were later transcribed from the tapes. The participants were asked to speak about "something minor in the past that did not go as well as they had hoped or something that they regretted doing or not doing" in their lives.

### Results

*Past Counterfactual* If-*Clauses*

The oral data for past counterfactual *if*-clauses (29 sentences) were categorized into the following three patterns according to the tense and modals used in the *if*-clauses and then counted for each category.

Pattern 1: The Past Perfect in *If*-Clauses

Fifteen sentences out of 29 (52%) used the past perfect in *if*-clauses. A few examples follow:

1. If I *hadn't been* a nurse, I would have been a journalist.
2. If the ball game *hadn't been* on, I would have gone to McDonald's for a hamburger.

Table 1. Participants for Study One

| **Counterfactual *If*-Clauses** | | | | **Counterfactual *Wish*-Clauses** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant | Age | Gender | Occupation | Participant | Age | Gender | Occupation |
| 1 | 73 | F | Retired registered nurse | 1 | 51 | F | Elementary teacher |
| 2 | 72 | M | Retired sales executive | 2 | late 40s | M | Van driver |
| 3 | 55 | F | Dental hygienist | 3 | 27 | M | Computer engineer |
| 4 | 54 | M | City planner | 4 | 28 | M | Computer engineer |
| 5 | 51 | F | Elementary teacher | 5 | 29 | M | Student |
| 6 | 77 | M | Retired stagehand | 6 | 42 | F | ESL teacher |
| 7 | 72 | M | Landlord | 7 | 42 | M | ESL teaher |
| 8 | 29 | M | Student | 8 | 27 | F | Grad. student in ESL |
| 9 | 19 | F | Student | 9 | 25 | F | Grad. student in ESL |

3. If Ben Franklin *had had* his way, we wouldn't be eating turkey for Thanksgiving.

Pattern 2*: Would Have* in *If*-Clauses

The following 12 sentences (41%) contained *would have* in the *if*-clauses:

4. If I *would*n't*'ve* turned on the game, she would never have known what to do.
5. If Gary Anderson *would've* kicked the Viking's field goal at the end of the season last year, we would have won the Superbowl.
6. If Stanley *wouldn't have* gone hunting for our turkey today, we would have eaten duck.
7. If I *would have* had enough money in high school, I would have traveled more.
8. If I *would've* had kids, I wouldn't have gone that far.
9. If I *would've* had a chance to go to SPA and learned coaching there, I could have been able to improve my skills a lot better.
10. If I *would have* played football a little bit longer, I probably would have played it in high school.
11. Even if I *would have* attended all the soccer practices, I don't think it would have made much difference.
12. If I*'d have* known she was ill, I'd have called her.
13. If I *would* not *have* known Gary, we would not have two lovely Japanese guests for Thanksgiving.
14. If the South *would have* won the Civil War, we would be living on plantations.
15. If I *would've* gone to Saint Paul Academy, I might have become a professional soccer player.

Pattern 3: The Simple Past in *If*-Clauses

Two sentences (7%) used the *simple past* in past counterfactual subordinate clauses:

16. I probably would've gone to bed a little bit earlier if you *didn't come* down.
17. If I *didn't have* a twin sister in high school I would've been alone, and I wouldn't have had a friend to talk to and to talk about high school with.

*Past Counterfactual* Wish-*Clauses*

The tape-recorded oral data (25 sentences) were categorized into the following two patterns: absence (Pattern 1) and presence (Pattern 2) of *would have* in *wish*-clauses.

Pattern 1: Absence of *Would Have* in *Wish*-Clauses

Twelve sentences out of the 25 obtained in the interviews (48%) used the past perfect or *could have* in the subordinate clause. Below are a few of the sentences:

18. I wish that I *had budgeted* better earlier this semester, then I would have

money today.
19. I wish there *hadn't been* the phone call.
20. When I was taking a class, I wish I *could've had* a different teacher.

Pattern 2: Presence of *Would Have* in *Wish*-Clauses

The other 13 sentences below (52%) employed *would have* in *wish*-subordinate clauses:

21. I wish I *would have* gone to Japan.
22. I wish I *would have* woke up earlier.
23. I wish I *would have* gone to bed earlier.
24. I wish I *would have* been recording him.
25. I wish that you *would've* called me, and I would've come and picked you up at the airport and I would've driven you home.
26. I wish I'*d have* asked her out again earlier, like, for the next weekend, then, I might have been able to start talking about the prom.
27. Actually I wish my parents *would have* guided me more to a proper major.
28. According to SEI, they wish they *would have* done that more.
29. I guess I wish I *wouldn't have* gone to my first assignment, which was up in the mountains.
30. I wish we *would have* waited a couple of years at least.
31. So that was something I wished I *would have* worked out.
32. I wish I *wouldn't've* worked my second job when I had the whole week off for vacation period.
33. You wish you *wouldn't have* used the word "regret."

These results are clear evidence that *would have* in the past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clause is indeed quite common among these English speaking participants in the midwest.[11]

## STUDY TWO: NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' PERCEPTION OF PAST COUNTERFACTUAL *WOULD HAVE* IN *IF*- AND *WISH*-CLAUSES IN INFORMAL ENGLISH

### Methodology

An additional judgment activity (see Appendix 1) was conducted with 120 informants. One hundred of them held various occupations in and outside of the University of Minnesota and at airports in St. Louis, Missouri and Austin, Texas and ranged in age (from early twenties to early seventies). Many of these 100 participants had grown up and were based in Minnesota or other Midwestern states, although approximately 20 of them came from eastern, western and southern parts of the United States and other English speaking countries. The remaining 20 informants were ESL teachers and graduate students in ESL at a midwestern university and ranged in age from late twenties to late fifties. The majority had grown up and

spent most of their lives in the Midwest.

The activity was based on a written dialogue between two students discussing one student's past semester in Rome. The sentences in the dialogue included five *if* and four *wish* structures with or without *would have* (see superscript numbers in Appendix 1) and several other several other types of grammatical errors as distracters. The participants were asked to read the written dialogue quickly as if they were hearing it, and to circle errors and correct them. Then, the participants were to review it one more time and underline expressions that seemed correct but unlike what they themselves would use. The participants were given approximately five minutes to complete the activity, although some took longer and responded more carefully than others. The written dialogue was meant to be colloquial and extremely informal to probe the judgment of the participants for a casual interaction. However, the contracted form of *would* (*'d*) was avoided in the activity in order to clearly indicate the presence of *would* and prevent its possible confusion with contracted *had* (*'d*). It should be noted that reading a dialogue is a task designed to make it easier for respondents to detect errors in spoken language, since written errors often stand out much more than spoken ones. The written measure was used because it functioned to make the *would have* usages more readily recognizable, rendering the task friendlier to the respondents. The written measure also assisted in obtaining a larger number of responses.

**Results**

Since judgments made by ESL professionals probably would not be representative of perceptions of all native English speakers, results of the judgment activity were scored separately for ESL professionals and other native speakers. Participants indicated what was correct, and what seemed correct but was something they would not personally use. One of the three major tendencies that became evident was a high acceptance rate of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*-clauses (see Table 2). The majority of non-ESL professionals regarded *would have* as correct (87% for *would have told*, 77% for *would have studied*). A few (5%, 3%) indicated that although *would have* is correct, they would not use it themselves. This suggests that the rest (82%, 74%) thought that they would use *would have* in such past counterfactual *if*-clauses. More than half of the ESL professionals considered *would have* an error and presented the past perfect as an alternative, while approximately one third regarded *would have* as correct.

The findings for *wish* structures (see Table 3) showed that 85% of the non-ESL professionals (and 45% of the ESL professionals) indicated that *would have gone* is correct. For the second item *would have went*, 31% of the non-ESL professionals (and 55% of the ESL professionals) corrected *went* only, indicating *would have gone* was the correct form. In addition to those who viewed *would have went* as correct, 80% of the non-ESL professionals (and 60% of the ESL professionals) accepted *would have* as correct. Fewer participants (3% of the non-ESL, 35% of

the ESL) indicated the past perfect *had gone* was the correct form.

Finally, there was a high level of inconsistency observed among the responses to items with identical sentence structure. To illustrate, some participants indicated *would have told* in an *if*-clause was an error while *would have studied* in another *if*-clause went uncorrected and was thus accepted. Consequently, the total numbers between the *if*- and *wish*-clauses were inconsistent. Even some participants who voluntarily commented on the *would have* usage did not point out every *would have* in subordinate clauses. Only one non-ESL professional (out of 100) and five ESL professionals (out of 20) consistently indicated and corrected every *would have* according to prescriptive grammar rules. A small number of participants not only evaluated every *would have* in the activity as correct, but even went through the trouble of changing past perfect forms and *could have* to *would have* (see Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

The spoken data in Study One revealed the frequent adoption of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses among these native English-speaking participants. These data suggest that the language may be in flux in this area, with the acceptability of this usage becoming more widespread than is indicated in the grammar books. Approximately 40-50% of the past counterfactual sentences included *would have* in subordinate clauses even though the data were collected in a "form-conscious" setting in which the participants were being tape-recorded. Results of the judgment activity in Study Two also suggest a prevailing acceptance of the *would have* usage among these native speaker participants. A clear majority did not detect *would have* as an error in the informal dialogue. It is important to note, however, that since the judgement activity was in a written form and the participants were probably conscious of the tape-recorder, the data may not accurately reflect their production and perception in authentic unmonitored speech.

Several hypotheses from the literature and personal communications can be proposed to further explore why *would have*, as well as the past perfect, is used in past counterfactual subordinate clauses. Although no single interpretation would entirely account for this phenomenon, each sheds light on this phenomenon from a different perspective. First, for many speakers, a matching modal, *would have* (or *'d have*) in both subordinate and main clauses "rolls off the tongue much more easily" than the standard form (Lambert, 1986, p. 29). This phonological and grammatical symmetry may contribute to the frequent use of *would have*. However, this hypothesis does not hold true for the *wish* construction in which there is no parallel structure, and thus no pressure for symmetry (Hancock, 1993, p. 247).

Second, some speakers seem to communicate formality by employing the past perfect and informality by utilizing *would have* in subordinate clauses, believing that the distinction between the two is merely a stylistic difference. In the judgment activity, a few participants indicated that they used *would have* in subordinate

Table 2: Native English Speakers' Perception and Acceptance of *Would Have* in Past Counterfactual *If*-Clauses

| (The superscript numbers in this column correspond to those in the text and the judgment activity in Appendix 1.) | **Forms in the Subordinate Clause Perceived as Correct/ Correct But Would Not Say**<br>Pattern 1: past perfect<br>Pattern 2: would + perfect<br>Pattern 3: simple past | Number of Responses and Percentage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ESL Teachers/ Teachers in Training (n=20) | Non-ESL Participans (n=100) | Total of ESL & Non-ESL (N=120)[5] |
| If someone would have told[1] me... | Pattern 1: *had told* | 11 (55%) | 11 (11%)[1] | 22 (18%) |
| | Pattern 2: no change | 7 (35%) | 82 (82%) | 89 (74%) |
| | Pattern 3: *told* | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) |
| | Others[2] | 1 (5%) | 1 (1%) | 2 (2%) |
| | *Would have told* is correct but would not say it | 1 (5%) | 5 (5%) | 6 (5%) |
| ...if I would have studied[7] more. | Pattern 1: *had studied* | 14 (70%) | 21 (21%)[3] | 35 (29%) |
| | Pattern 2: no change | 5 (25%) | 74 (74%) | 79 (66%) |
| | Others[2] | 1 (5%) | 2 (2%) | 3 (2%) |
| | *Would have studied* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 3 (3%) | 3 (2%) |
| If I wasn't[4] so busy... | Pattern 1: *hadn't been* | 8 (40%) | 9 (9%) | 17 (14%) |
| | Pattern 2: *wouldn't have been* | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) |
| | Pattern 3 (formal): *weren't* | 5 (25 %) | 5 (5%) | 10 (8%) |
| | Pattern 3 (informal): no change | 4 (20%) | 83 (83%) | 87 (72%) |
| | Others[2] | 1 (5%) | 3 (3%)[4] | 4 (3%) |
| | *Wasn't* is correct but would not say it | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) |

[1] This includes two answers (2%) which indicated that *had told* is correct but that they would say *would have*.
[2] Others include other expressions and errors indicated without corrections.
[3] This includes one answer (1%) which indicated that *had studied* is correct but s/he would say *would have studied*.
[4] This includes one answer (1%) which indicated that *weren't* or *hadn't been* is correct but s/he would say *wasn't*.
[5] The difference between ESL and non-ESL participants' responses to *would have told* and *would have studied* was significant. A chi-square test showed significance difference ($x^2$=22.29, $p<.05$ for *would have told* and $x^2$=20.847, $p<.05$ for *would have studied*).

Table 3 Native English Speakers' Perception and Acceptance of *Would Have* in Past Counterfactual *Wish*-Clauses

| (The superscript numbers in this column correspond to those in the text and the judgment activities in Appendix 1.) | **Forms in the Subordinate Clause Perceived as Correct/ Correct But Would Not Say**<br>Pattern 1: absence of would have<br>Pattern 2: presence of would have | Number of Responses and Percentage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ESL Teachers or Teachers in Training (n=20) | Non- ESL participants (n=100) | Total of ESL & Non-EL participants (N=120) [3] |
| I wish I would have gone[9] ... | Pattern 1: *had gone* | 6 (30%) | 4 (4%)[1] | 10 (8%) |
| | Pattern 1: *could have gone* | 4 (20%) | 7 (7%) | 11 (9%) |
| | Pattern 2: no change | 9 (45%) | 80 (80%) | 89 (74%) |
| | Others[2] | 1 (5%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (4%) |
| | *Would have gone* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 5 (5%) | 5 (4%) |
| I wish I would have went[3] ... | Pattern 1: *had gone* | 7 (35%) | 3 (3%) | 10 (8%) |
| | Pattern 1: *could have went* | 0 (0%) | 2 (2%) | 2 (2%) |
| | Pattern 2: *would have gone* | 11 (55%) | 31 (31%) | 42 (35%) |
| | Pattern 2: no change | 1 (5%) | 49 (49%) | 50 (42%) |
| | Others[2] | 1 (5%) | 12 (12%) | 13 (11%) |
| | *Would have went* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 3 (3%) | 3 (2%) |

[1] This includes one answer (5%) which indicated that *had gone* is correct but that s/he would say *would have*.

[2] Others include other expressions and errors indicated without corrections.

[3] Although there was less division of opinions between the ESL and non-ESL participants for *wish*-clauses than *if*-clauses, a chi-square test showed that the difference between the responses to *would have* in *wish*-clauses derived from ESL and non-ESL participants was still statistically significant (for *would have gone*, $x^2=15.73$, $p<.05$; for *would have went*, $x^2=15.73$, $p<.05$).

Table 4: Native English Speakers' Perception and Acceptance of the Past Perfect and *Could Have* in Past Counterfactual *If-* and *Wish*-Clauses

| (The superscript numbers in this column correspond to those in the text and the judgment activity in Appendix 1.) | **Forms in the Subordinate Clause Perceived as Correct/ Correct But Would Not Say**<br>Pattern 1: past perfect<br>Pattern 2: would + perfect<br>Pattern 3: simple past<br>Pattern 4: could + perfect | Number of Responses and Percentage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ESL Teachers or Teachers in Training (n=20) | Non-ESL Participants (n=100) | Total of ESL & Non-ESL (N=120) |
| ... if I had had[5] more money | Pattern 1: no change | 19 (95%) | 84 (84%) | 103 (86%) |
| | Pattern 2: *would have had* | 0 (0%) | 2 (2%) | 2 (2%) |
| | Pattern 3: *had* | 1 (5%) | 1 (1%) | 2 (2%) |
| | Others[1] | 0 (0%) | 5 (5%) | 5 (4%) |
| | *Had had* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 8 (8%)[2] | 8 (7%) |
| I wish I had had[2] more time ... | Pattern 1: no change | 19 (95%) | 81 (81%) | 100 (83%) |
| | Pattern 2: *would have had* | 0 (0%) | 4 (4%) | 4 (3%) |
| | Pattern 3: *had* | 1 (5%) | 6 (6%) | 7 (6%) |
| | Others[3] | 0 (0%) | 5 (5%) | 5 (4%) |
| | *Would have studied* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 4 (4%) | 4 (3%) |
| If I could have lived[8] ... | Pattern 1: *had lived* | 5 (25%) | 3 (3%) | 8 (7%) |
| | Pattern 2: *would have lived* | 0 (0%) | 3 (3%) | 3 (3%) |
| | Pattern 4: no change | 13 (65%) | 89 (89%) | 102 (85%) |
| | Others[4] | 1 (5%) | 3 (3%) | 4 (3%) |
| | *Could have lived* is correct but would not say it | 1 (5%) | 2 (2%) | 3 (3%) |
| I wish I could have done[6] ... | Pattern 1: *had done* | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) |
| | Pattern 4: no change | 20 (100 %) | 98 (98%) | 118 (98%) |
| | *Wasn't* is correct but would not say it | 0 (0%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) |

[1] Others include other expressions (*have had*, 1%) and errors indicated without corrections.
[2] This includes three answers (3%) which indicated that *had had* was correct but that they would say *had*, and one answer (1%) that indicated that s/he would say *'d a had* even if *had had* was correct.
[3] Others include other expressions (*have had*, 1% from a non-ESL participant) and errors indicated without corrections.
[4] Others include other expressions and errors indicated without corrections.

clauses in informal speech knowing that it was ungrammatical. One participant, J. Selman (personal communication, March 29, 2001) commented that although he used the past perfect in formal situations and in writing, he preferred *would have* in his interactions with peers in order to conform to the norm shared by his peers and not sound too scholarly.

The tendency to modify the past perfect with extra auxiliaries may also "represent an attempt by the speaker to impose a subjunctive marker on the standard past perfect" (Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994, p. 746). The past perfect (e.g., *If I had had kids*) may not appear sufficiently "unreal" in past counterfactual structures, requiring a stronger marking for the subjunctive (thus, *If I would have had kids*, Sentence 8 in the data) (M. Celce-Murcia, personal communication, April 28, 2000; Hancock, 1993, p. 247; Molencki, 1998, p. 248, 2000, pp. 324-325).

A historical analysis further supports this argument in that main and subordinate clauses have alternated symmetrical and asymmetrical structures for centuries. According to Molencki (1998, 2000), in Middle English, the past perfect was used in both clauses to mark past counterfactuality (perhaps from the early thirteenth century to the nineteenth century) [e.g., *If he had died in Guiana, I had not left 300 Marks a Year to my Wife and Son*, (Molencki, 2000, p. 317)]. Although this parallelism was found until the nineteenth century, the past perfect usage in the subordinate clause and modal perfect in the main clause became a norm in Modern English by the turn of the eighteenth century, displaying asymmetrical structures [e.g, *if half the charge had been laid out here, it would have secured all that*, (Molencki, 1998, p. 245)]. Molencki's interpretation of this asymmetry is that the main clause was perceived as more "remote" or "unreal" than the subordinate clause, the main clause being based on the counterfactuality in the subordinate clause. Consequently, an additional subjunctive marker had to be called for in the main clause. Present-day spoken English, however, has again restored new parallelism with the use of the modal perfect *would have* in both clauses in non-standard speech (e.g., *If I wouldn't have turned on the game, she would never have known what to do*, Sentence 4 in the data). In Molencki's analysis, Modern English speakers may be unsatisfied with the past perfect, which does not appear to be "modal enough," and attach greater modality by using purely grammaticalized *would* with no volitional sense.

Some grammarians seem to believe in the rare "legitimate" usage of *would have* in subordinate clauses. Since *would* carries volitional meaning, "be willing to," a speaker may distinguish *would have* from the past perfect to communicate volition[5] [e.g., *If he would have consented, all would have been right*, (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 1989)]. In such cases, the *would have* usage may be considered correct even in prescriptive grammar.

The final interpretation for the frequent use of *would have* suggests that speakers make an analogy based on another accepted form *would* + infinitive. Unlike *would have* in past counterfactual subordinate clauses, *would*, in reference to the present or future is viewed as "grammatical." Given that *would* is grammatical in the present counterfactual [e.g., *I wish you would be quiet*, (Alexander, 1998, p.

225)], why is it not in the past counterfactual (e.g., *I wish you would have been quiet*)? It seems only natural that both forms might be perceived as acceptable (also see Note 8).

Although it is not possible in this study to pinpoint the exact reasons why *would have* is utilized in past counterfactual subordinate clauses, it would be interesting to uncover what affects or determines a speaker's choice in constructing a past counterfactual conditional sentence. Speakers' choices of forms may be made unconsciously or subconsciously; this may particularly be true of native speakers whose language could easily operate below their level of consciousness. Do speakers and listeners identify differences in meaning between the past perfect and *would have*? Who is more likely to use *would have*, and on what occasions do speakers use or not use *would have*? The *would have* usage might be more accepted in particular registers, interactional contexts, or correlated with extralinguistic social variables such as the speaker and the listener's age, education, socioeconomic status, and styles. One way of answering these questions would be to conduct a sociolingustic analysis of these extralingustic variables for speakers who produce past counterfactual conditionals. Another way would be through a conversation analytic investigation of the interactional contexts in which *would have* does and does not appear in subordinate clauses. Such an approach using large corpora of spoken English might reveal particular environments in which the *would have* variant seems to appear regularly. Finally, given the evidence presented in this paper that the *would have* variant is used in newspapers, it would be interesting to determine the extent to which this structure is now used in more formal written contexts.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This section explores what issues the prelevent usage of *would have* in subordinate *if*-and *wish*-clauses in spoken discourse raises in second language teaching and learning. How should the past counterfactual be taught in ESL classrooms? Should students be instructed to only use the past perfect in past counterfactual subordinate clauses, or should *would have* be presented as an alternative? How do teachers who use *would have* in their own speech teach the past counterfactual conditional? A number of ESL teachers and teachers in training have indeed mentioned that they had not been aware that such usage was viewed as incorrect in prescriptive grammar. If native speakers of English, and even English teachers, consider it acceptable, how should learners' usage of *would have* be evaluated?

Given that some native English speakers frequently use *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses, ESL students may also produce that form after being exposed to such input. Izumi and Bigelow (2000) and Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara, and Fearnow (1999) focused on the past counterfactual *if* conditional and found learners' occasional use of *would have* in *if*-clauses. Among 306 past counterfactual conditional sentences the participants produced prior to instruction on conditionals in the two studies, 14 sentences contained *would have* in the past

counterfactual subordinate clause (5%). Six out of 39 participants (15%) used *would have* from one to five times in the pretest. Examples include

If Kevin *would have studied*, he would have passed the test.

If Jack *would have joined* to the Navy he will have gone to the Iraq's war.

If Kevin *would have caught* the bus, he will have been on time.

Considering the fact that these participants had already been exposed to a great deal of spoken English in authentic informal settings, it is possible to hypothesize that native English speakers' occasional use of *would have* may have had an impact on the learners' grammar.

Apart from such informal settings, in formal instruction what explanation should be given to learners in order to solve the discrepancy that exists between what they hear in their daily lives and what they typically find in grammar books? Although very few ESL grammar textbooks provide any explanation regarding this informal usage of *would have*, some textbook writers seem to believe that the *would have* usage should be described in their texts. Azar contends that her job as a materials writer is to inform learners of the structures and real-life language usage employing a descriptive approach (personal communication, February 28, 2001). Celce-Murcia also agrees that the past counterfactual *would have* structure should be documented in ESL/EFL teacher resources so that instructors can become aware of this informal usage (personal communication, July 20, 2000).

In teaching the past counterfactual, assessment of learners' needs and goals must be made in order to determine how the structure should be taught. Learners whose ultimate goal is successful communication in informal settings would probably benefit from classroom instruction in which both the past perfect and *would have* are taught in *if-* and *wish*-clauses. On the other hand, academically oriented learners would need to be informed of the fact that formal registers do not allow *would have* in subordinate clauses. Since such learners are likely to be tested on their knowledge and performance by standardized tests like the TOEFL, they need to be informed about the way past counterfactual subordinate clauses are tested and evaluated on such tests. Following are two positions on this point held by two acclaimed standardized test services, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

The TOEFL is designed by ETS primarily to evaluate the English proficiency of international students who wish to study at colleges and universities in North America. According to ETS [Online], the language tested is formal rather than conversational. Section 2, Structure and Written Expression, tests an examinee's ability to recognize the correct grammatical structure and to detect errors in *standard written English*. My personal e-mail communication with ETS reveals their stance on this section of the TOEFL in further detail (April 13, 2001). P. Everson, an

ESL/EFL Area Leader, and M. Tolo, a test developer for the Structure and Written Expression section, state that they "avoid testing as an error, any point that might be judged acceptable by educated native speakers of standard North American English." At the same time, Tolo states that he cannot say with certainty that they have never tested the *would have* usage in past counterfactual subordinate clauses in the past. Considering the fact that the TOEFL tests formal "standard *written* North American English" usage, and *would have* in past counterfactual *if-* and *wish*-clauses is condemned in formal English, the TOEFL may have conventionally tested the grammaticality of the *would have* structure in the past. An EFL textbook, *TOEFL no Eibunpou* (Hanamoto, 1992), featuring a complete investigation of the past TOEFL items, contains two exercises in which *would have* must be recognized as an error (See Example 9). With regard to their future direction, however, Tolo adds that he "would prefer not to test *would have* as a grammatical error," and therefore, he "rather doubts" that *would have* will be found tested on any TOEFL in the future.

UCLES seems to maintain a more clearly delineated policy towards language varieties. Variations which are only regionally accepted or nonstandard are not tested at all for fairness to all test takers. L. Taylor, a Performance Testing Unit Coordinator, and J. Wilson, an EFL Participant Officer of the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate, (personal communication, March 1, 2001) state that structures like the past counterfactual are treated slightly differently in different sections of their examinations. In the listening section, in which colloquial references are tested along with other skills, examinees may be exposed to either structure, the past perfect or *would have* in subordinate clauses, although the test takers would not be asked to evaluate the correctness of, nor would they be tested on, the structure in any other fashion. In other sections of the exams (e.g., English in Use, Reading, and Writing) which test vocabulary knowledge and reading and writing skills, the *would have* form in subordinate clauses would not be tested at all.

Bearing in mind the fact that *would have* in past counterfactual *if-* and *wish*-clauses is used and perceived differently depending on the formality of the interaction, it appears only reasonable that a standardized test should avoid testing the grammaticality of such a controversial item. If a test includes informal spoken interactions, the *would have* usage may be included in the listening section, reflecting the way English is spoken in real life. Native speakers do not always follow prescriptive grammar, particularly in areas where the language is changing, and a descriptive approach to second language teaching and testing would facilitate learners' understanding of commonly used informal varieties of the language.

However, since authorized test policies following prescriptive grammar rules are unlikely to change overnight, ESL/EFL teachers may be required to be realistic in preparing learners for the TOEFL and academic writing and speaking. In a particular EFL setting where the only learner goal is to merely pass a standardized test which prohibits the *would have* form and not to become a proficient speaker of the target language, instructors should become aware of their usage of this structure

and remember to produce only the past perfect in the classroom to avoid confusion on the learners' part. Learners should be instructed to use the past perfect only in subordinate clauses in formal writing, speaking and testing.

However, if learners' goals include successful real-life communication, learners would probably benefit from learning about native English speakers' informal usage of *would have*. Learners' use of *would have* in informal settings should also be evaluated as acceptable. In fact, Izumi and Bigelow (2000) and Izumi et al. (1999) rated the learners' *would have* usage in subordinate clauses as acceptable. E. Nelson, an ESL instructor at the University of Minnesota, also does not consider such *would have* usage as an error in spoken English, but mentions that in discussing such structures with ESL learners, he might point out that *would have* in subordinate clauses is sometimes considered incorrect and should be avoided in writing (personal communication, March 15, 2001). Through learning about the two forms, students will probably become aware of the appropriate use of formal and informal language varieties in general. Although the structures of the past counterfactual may strike learners as overwhelmingly complicated, the use of *would have* in both subordinate and main clauses may simplify the sentence formation process, and therefore, might appear more manageable to learners in informal speech and writing.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown frequent use of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses among American participants in Minnesota, and its prevailing acceptance in an informal written dialogue among participants in Minnesota and other Midwestern and Southern states. Past research has also evidenced the widespread usage of *would have* in past counterfactual *if*- and *wish*-clauses for centuries in many parts of the United States and Great Britain. In contrast, the majority of English language resources have neglected or avoided mentioning the past counterfactual *would have* usage or labeled it wrong or "non-standard." Further research is necessary to discover the way that the *would have* usage might be correlated with linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Language is rich in variety; not all usages are consciously analyzed by speakers and not all speakers share a single interpretation of a usage. Yet if our goal is to understand language and if a language belongs to its users, it should be studied as it is actually used and perceived.

## Appendix 1: Judgment Activity

(The inserted superscript numbers correspond to those in Tables 2, 3, and 4)

**Imagine that two students were talking. Now please read the dialogue. Circle and correct any errors you perceive.**

**Sam**: Hey! How's it going? Where've you been?

**Lisa**: I spent the last semester in Italy. It was awesome. I was there for a semester, though it seems like a lot longer.

**Sam**: Where were you exactly?

**Lisa**: Rome.

**Sam**: So you had a great time or what?

**Lisa**: Of course! If someone would have told[1] me a year ago that I was going to live in Rome, I would not have believed them. There's so much to see and do and the food and wine were to die for.

**Sam**: Did you ever study or did you just hang out in the plazas?

**Lisa**: I wish. I was taking some Italian classes at a university in Rome, though I did manage to sneak away quite a bit. I wish I had had[2] more time to travel, but there's so many beautiful, old ruins in Rome that I did not have to go too far to feel like I was traveling. There's that famous Colosseum and a lot of cathedrals in Rome that you have just got to see to believe.

**Sam**: Did you go to Vatican City?

**Lisa**: No, I wish I would have went[3] there. If I wasn't[4] so busy with my classes, I would have been able to travel more. Also, if I had had[5] more money, I would have liked to have gone up to Venice and Trieste.

**Sam**: You mean you didn't even get to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa?

**Lisa**: No, I never made it too far from Rome. I wish I could have done[6] more sighseeing but I guess I will just have to go back.

**Sam**: Yeah, really. You must be good at Italian by now.

**Lisa**: I would be fluent by now if I would have studied[7] more. There are a lot of students who lived with Italian families and had to learn Italian. If I could have lived[8] with an Italian family I definitely would have learned more. All I really know is how to order twelve different types of pasta and red *vino*.

**Sam**: I can't believe you went to Italy for a semester while I was stuck here. Man, I wish I would have gone[9], too.

**Now, if anything seems correct, but not like anything you might say, please go back and underline it.**

## NOTES

[1] The 16 sources include: Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan, 1999; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Elbaum, 2001; Leech, 1971; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Palmer, 1974; Sharpe, 1999; Rymniak, Shanks, and Kaplan Educational Centers, 2000; Swales and Feak, 1994; Takeda and Takeuchi, 1992; Thewlis, 1997; Thompson and Martinet, 1999; Webster's English Language Desk Reference, 1999; Werner, 1990; Werner and Nelson, 1996; Yule, 1998.

[2] The sources include: Alexander, 1998; Evans and Evans, 1957; Fowler and Aaron, 1998; Greenbaum and Whitcut, 1993; Hanamoto, 1987; Hodges and Whitten, 1977, 1982; Hodges, Whitten, Horner, and Webb, 1990; Horner, Webb, and Miller, 1998; Lunsford and Conners, 1999; Microsoft, 2000; Murphy, 2000; Raimes, 1992; Swan, 1995; Whitcut, 1994.

[3] The six sources include: Azar, 1999; Fuchs and Bonner, 1995; Maurer, 1995; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989; Quirk et al., 1985; Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994.

[4] Following convention, the term *Modern English* is used for English dating from 1500, as opposed to *Middle English*, dating from 1100-1500. *Old English* refers to English used until around 1100 – 1150 (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989). Although there is no date specified for *present-day English* (e.g., Molencki, 1998, 2000; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989), it refers to relatively more current English use.

[5] Greenbaum and Whitcut (1993) give an exceptional usage of *would* in *if*-clauses in cases where *would* means *be willing to*. However, it is not clear whether this exceptional usage of *would* applies to past counterfactuals as well as to the form of *would have*. (Note also Example (10) from the OED which exemplifies volitional "choose to" or "be willing to" with *would have* in an *if*-clause.)

[6] The 11 sources include: Fowler and Aaron, 1998; Greenbaum and Whitcut, 1993; Horner et al., 1998; Lunsford and Connors, 1999; Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994; Raimes, 1992; Rymniak et al., 2000; Sharpe, 1999; Swales and Feak, 1994; Whitcut, 1994; Yule, 1998.

[7] The 19 sources include: Alexander, 1998; Biber et al., 1999; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Elbaum, 2001; Evans and Evans, 1957; Fuchs and Bonner, 1995; Hanamoto, 1987; Maurer, 1995; Leech, 1971; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Palmer, 1974; Quirk et al., 1985; Takeda and Takemoto, 1992; Thewlis, 1997; Thomson and Martinet, 1999; Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994; Webster's English Language Desk Reference, 1999; Werner, 1990; Werner and Nelson, 1996.

[8] Among the examples given in Alexander (1998), *could* is used with both the infinitive and the perfect (e.g., *I wish I* ***could*** *swim/I wish I* ***could have*** *been with you*, Alexander, 1998, p. 225), while *would* appears only with the infinitive (e.g., *I wish you* ***would****n't make so much noise*, Alexander, 1998, p. 225). The lack of illustration or discussion of the structure *would have* creates ambiguity as to whether or not such a construction is acceptable. The "grammatical" usage of *could have* could cause readers to assume that *would have* is also grammatical, but the absence of *would have* examples could also cause readers to assume the opposite. This ambiguity was also found among some other sources enumerated in Note 7 above.

[9] See p. 32 for examples from the data collected in this study (Pattern 3).

[10] See Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Hwang (1979) for discussion of this structure.

[11] Electronic databases can also be utilized to reveal authentic use and frequency of a grammtical structure (Biber & Conrad, 2001). Some spoken corpora can provide additional evidence that *would have* (or *would've*) occurs in past counterfactual subordinate clauses in speech in American, British, and Canadan English (Collins Wordbanks *Online* English corpus, 2002; Complete Lexical Tutor OnLine Concordance, 2002; Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, 2002).

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**Noriko Ishihara** is a PhD student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota. Her areas of interest include teaching L2 pragmatics, learner identity in language learning, pedagogical grammar, and professional teacher development. She has taught ESL/EFL and created pragmatics-focused materials for ESL and Japanese learners.