Mandative Constructions in American Bestsellers of 1900

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Two of my previous studies[1] surveyed how mandative sense is expressed after the words of demanding, ordering, requesting and others in the bestselling books in America.[2] The first one examined nineteen books in the bestselling list of 1988, ten fictions and nine non-fictions. It showed that the words that express the mandative sense included from *demand, insist, request, suggest* and others which are characterized as typical mandative verbs to *insturct, stipulate, best, natural, importance* and others which are not usually considered mandative words. It confirmed the general statement about the American usage of mandative subjuncitve, namely that in the mandative constructions Americans prefer subjunctive construction, i.e., mandative word (+ *that*) + subjunctive, rather than mandativae word (+ *that*) + *should* construction. However, it also found out that the infinitive construction with a mandative word is the most common type of the mandative constructions.

In the second study, the American bestselling fiction books and non-fiction books in the year of 1948 are used to see whether or not fifty years have seen any change in the preference of the usage of mandative construction. Ten fictions and nine non-fictions were surveyed. The words that expressed the mandative force in 1948 books include the same or similar words that appeared in the first study as well as the different words such as

better, inevitable, urgent and others. This study confirmed the conclusion of the previous study of the tendency of the mandative cosntruction in America, namely the infinitive construction with a word with mandative force is the most common mandative construction in the books from 1948. However, it also showed that the mandative word (+ *that*) + *should* construction was as common as the mandative word (+ *that*) + subjunctive construction. This may be said to be a new finding contrary to a generally held opinion about the mandative construction of American English.

In the following study, the American bestselling fiction books in the year of 1900 are examined to see whether or not there is any change in preference of the usage of mandative construction in another fifty years' span. As in the previous two studies, the 1900 Bestselling List was used again. The reason for this is the same as in the previous two studies, that is the fact that these books appeared in the bestselling list of a specific year shows that they are popular books of the year and have, in a sense, popular content as well as writing style and language which are easily accepted by the readers of the time, which as a result represents the usage of the time. The 1900 List has, however, only fiction books listed, so the ten books listed thereat as the bestsellers of 1900 are surveyed. However, as the survey proceeded, one of them had to be excluded. It is Mary Cholmondrey's *Red Potage*. Although the book appears in the list of American bestsllers, the author is English and, for this reason, she was excluded from the present survey of mandative constructions of American English, just as Winston Churchill's *The Second World War, Vol.1. The Gathering Storm* was excluded in the survey of 1948.

All the nine books listed in the list were surveyed by the present writer and each instance in which a mandative construction is used is recorded by him for analysis. In these books, the mandative force is expressed by the

following words:

> *ask, advise, agree, announce, beg, command, desire, decide,*
>
> *demand, dictate, declare, determine, enact, forbid, insist,*
>
> *implore, order, ordain, request, plead, petition, prefer, prey,*
>
> *propose, suggest, swear, tell, urge, vow, will, warn, wish,*
>
> *best, fair, fitting, important, inevitable, necessary, natural,*
>
> *right, proper*

With these words eight types of mandative constructions are construed:

1. A. *that* + *should*
   B. 0 + *should*
2. A. *that* + subjunctive
   B. 0 + subjunctive
3. A. *that* + periphrastic
   B. 0 + periphrasitic
4. infinitive
5. gerund

   N.B. 0 stands for the absence of the connective *that*.

There are, of course, some constructions that do not fall under any of the patterns mentioned above. For example, Paul Leicester Ford's *Janice Meredith: A Story of the American Revolution* has the following construction as "I suggest … that we put a finish to our war …." In other places, Ford writes "… and 't was I suggested that we go on reading this morning," showing clearly that the mandative verb *suggest* is followed by a subjunctive. In the former case it is not clear whether the verb form in the noun clause

is a present indicative or present subjunctive, since both have the same
form. This is ambiguous and is excluded from the grouping and thus from
the analyis. Another instance that does not belong to any of the eight
types is "I recommend that ye do not advertise the fact when ye return
to Philadelphia" (Paul Leicester Ford), in which the verb *advertise* in the
noun clause after the mandative verb *recommend* is indicative instead of the
usually expected form of "ye not advertise the fact". As Eva-Liisa Fillbrandt
concludes as "The use of the indicatives increases in the course of the whole
period (= the Early Modern Period),"[3] the indicative type appears once in a
while but this type is excluded from the anaylysis here.

As Figure 1 shows, there are 552 instances of mandative constructions
in all the ten books that appear in the list. Besides these instances, there are
fourteen constructions that should be classified as ambiguous and eighty-
eight are from the British writer, Mary Cholmondrey's *Red Potage*. All these
102 instances (fourteen ambiguous and eighty-eight British) are taken from
the total number and the remaining 552 instances are to be considered to
belong to any of the eight mandative construction types.

Figure 1. Types of Mandative Construction and Number of Instances

construction types	number of instances	
1. A. *that* + *should*	107	
B. 0 + *should*	9	
2. A. *that* + subjunctive	30	clause
B. 0 + subjunctive	4	202
3. A. *that* + periphrastic	38	
B. 0 + periphrasitc	14	
4. infinitive	325	phrase
5. gerund	25	350

total   552

N.B. 0 stands for the absence of the connective *that*.

Of the eight types, the type 4, namely the infinitve construction, is the most common construction and has 312 active voice constructions and thirteen passive voice constructions, totaling up to 325 instances. In the percentage terms, the active voice is 56.6% and the passive 2.4 %, both of which amount to almost 59% of all the mandative constructions collected from the materials. Since in the survey of the 1998 bestselling books, the infinitve construction occupies about 42% and in the 1948 survey it was approximately 56%, this percentage shows the same preference of American usage of mandative constructions. If we limit the comparison to the fiction books of respective years, there are 108 instances of infinitive mandative constructions out of the total number of 274 instances in the 1998 survey (about 39%) and 389 instances out of the total number of 610 in the 1948 survey (about 64%). The percentage of infinitive construction in 1900 fictions is just as high as that in 1948.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this preference of infinitve construction is sought in its speediness and brevity. While a clause construction gives readers heaviness and formality, the infinitive construction gives more colloquialness and smoothness. As a result, a sentence with infinitve mandative construction is felt less formal and is considered to represent more natural speedy style of speech.

The infinitive construction surveyed here can be divided into two subtypes, namely active voice construction and passive voice construction, each further being subdivided into affirmative and negative. Thus, this infinitive construction has four subtypes, namely a) affirmative active voice, b) negative active voice, c) affirmative passive voice, and d) negative pasive

voice. Of these four subtypes, a) has 293 instances, b) has 19, c) has 13 but there is no instance for d). Two things can be noticed from this. The first is that the number of the passive voice construction instances is very low. As Figure 2 shows, the total number of a) and b) is 312, while that of c) and d) is only13.

Figure 2. Active and Passive Voices in Mandative Construction

construction type	active		passive		
1. A. *that* + *should*	88 ⌐		19 ⌐		
B. 0 + *should*	7		2		
2. A. *that* + subjunctive	15		15		clause
B. 0 + subjunctive	4	158	0	44	202
3. A. *that* + auxiliary	32		6		
B. 0 + auxiliary	12 ⌐		2 ⌐		
4. infinitive	312 ⌐	334	13 ⌐	16	phrase
5. gerund	22 ⌐		3 ⌐		350
total	492		60		552

Figure 3. Affirmative and Negative in Mandative Construction

construction type	affirmative		negative		
1. A. *that* + *should*	102 ⌐		5 ⌐		
B. 0 + *should*	9		0		
2. A. *that* + subjunctive	29		1		clause
B. 0 + subjunctive	3	187	1	15	202
3. A. *that* + auxiliary	35		3		
B. 0 + auxiliary	9 ⌐		5 ⌐		

4. infinitive	306 ⎤ 331	19 ⎤ 19	phrase
5. gerund	25 ⎦	0 ⎦	350
total	518	34	552

As Figure 3 shows, of all the 325 instances of infinitive construction, negative construction is only 13. Thus, the most unpopular combination of infinitve construction is the one that is of passive voice and is in the negative, namely negative passive voice construction and this is shown by the fact that no such instance is found in all the instances used for this survey. Speaking of the negative infinitive construction, Charles Frederic Goss employs a little different construction; "… we are commanded in the Holy Bible to judge not." The usual position of the negative *not* should be in front of *to* as in "not to judge." The reason why it is brought after the verb *judge* may be sought in the usage of the Bible, where the negative command is still expressed with *not* postposited after a verb, following the older word order of the previous period. This usage also adds formality and heaviness to the command.

The second most frequent mandative construction is the type 1A, namely a constuction with a mandative word followed by a noun clause with the auxiliary *should* and with the connective *that*, as in "Madame de Riedesel insisted that Janice and Mrs. Meredith should quit the springless army van." (Paul Leicester Ford) or "Clark had given strict orders that all prisoners should be brought into the fort." (Maurice Thompson). This type has 107 instances in total and occupies approximately 19% of all the mandative constructions. This is curious, since the previous two studies of mine indicate that 2A type construction is the second most common construction in 1998 and 1948 materials and the 1A type construction, though almost as common as the 2A type in 1948, is very rare in 1998. As far as the materials used in

these three periods show, the 1A type construction seems to become less common as the time moves down.

Figure 2 shows that of the total 351 instances there are 491 instances of active voice construction and sixty of passive voices. The passive voice is employed very rarely and as to the 1A type construction this tendency is the same. There are eighty-eight active voice constructions and only nineteen passive voice constructions. Figure 3 also tells an interesting tendency as to the uasage of affirmative and negative in the mandative construction. Of all the 551 isntances, 517 are affirmatives and negatives are merely thirty-four. The same can be said for the 1A type. There are 102 affirmative constructions while there are only five negative ones.

The third most common construction is the pattern in which a main word with mandative force is followed by a noun clause with the connective *that* and the verb in the clause is in the periphrastic. The verbs in the noun clause are conjoined variously by many kinds of auxiliaries and other words except *should* as in the following:

> … begged that I could sometime think of him when I was out under the sky. (Winston Churchill)

> … merely begging that they might spend the last night … (Paul Leicester Ford)

> The Congress's order is that any one guilty of seeking to communicate with the enemy is to be put under arrest. (ibid.)

There are also instances in which *will, may, had better* are used. As Eva-Liisa Fillbrandt says that "The mandative subjunctive and its periphrastic alternant are however not absolutely equivalent",[4] each of these is used to express varying degrees of mandative force and thus employed to show the

subtle different nuances of the command, demand, and others.

Thirty-eight instances fall under this type and occupy about 7% of all the constructions. Of the thirty-eight instances, thirty-two are of active voice and six are of the passive. As in other constructions, the passive voice is not very common. Nor is the negative construction. There are only three negative instances, while there are thirty-five affirmatives.

Interesting is the lower frequency of the auxiliary constructions without the connective *that*. As is said above, the total number of the instances of the auxiliary constructions with the connective *that* is thirty-eight, while that without the connective is only fourteen. This connective appears both in narrative parts and direct speeches, so its presence does not seem to suggest that it is used to show the colloquialness but to show that it is a more prevalent standard form to introduce a noun clause.

The fourth is the construction grouped as 2A type in the above, namely the construction with a mandative word followed by a noun clause with a verb in the subjunctive mood with the connective *that* as in "They made only two demands: that she eat whatever was put on the table and love them" (James Allen). There are thirty such constructions (about 5%). As Figure 2 shows, there are fifteen active voice constructions and fifteen passives. Interesting is the fact that the affirmative construction appears in twenty-nine instances while there is only one instance of a negative. This low frequency of the construction is surprising when we compare it with the result of the surveys of the 1998 and 1948 bestselling books. In both years this type comes the second after the infinitve construction and is said to go with a generally held opinion that this type is a typically American mandative construction. Even combined with seventeen instances of the construction with a noun clause with a verb in the subjunctive mood without the connective *that*, the total number of mandative subjunctive

construction is small and this type must be considered to play a marginal or minor role in mandative construction in 1900 bestseller books. This agrees with the statement by Kellner, who says that English would "get rid of it (= mandative subjunctive) altogether."[5] Visser also states that the mandative subjunctive "tends to become archaic or obsolete in late Modern English."[6] The reason for the low frequency of this type is not clear, but we may hazard a guess. Many of the books used here for the survey deal not with the contemporary themes but with the themes of earlier period such as the Colonial period. Thus it may be possible that the writers attempt to create an older atmosphere whichi is naturally associated with British influence, for which they might have employed the construction that has *should* in the noun clause, which was considered to appear more British, rather than the construction with a verb in subjunctive mood.

As in 1998 and 1948, the gerund is also not a very popular mandative construction in 1900. There are only twenty-five gerund instances in total (about 3%) as in the following:

> I shall insist on preserving our American social traditions inviolate .... (Robert Grant)

> It was she herself who had proposed going with me to see Betsy sail .... (Winston Churchill)

> I advise going direct to Opechancanough ... (Marty Johnston)

This is perhaps due to the number of the verbs that can be construed with gerund. The number of such verbs is small and limited. The verbs found in the study are only three: *insist, advise* and *propose*, as shown above, and *insist* is the most frequently used verb with twenty-three instances. As in other constructions, the avtive voice is prevalent (twenty-two instances

out of the total twenty-five, about 88%). The passive voice construction is found only in the following:

> To struggle was useless save to insist upon being brained outright …. (Maurice Thompson)
>
> … and insisted upon Master Sparrow's being set for to administer consolation …. (Mary Johnston)
>
> I should insist on being married quietly. (Robert Grant)

There is not found an instance of a negative in the gerund construction. The paucity of passives and negatives is the same in 1998, 1949, and 1900.

Besides the distribution of the mandative construction types as discussed in the above, there are some interesting findings. One of them is, as Figure 2 shows, the predominant use of the connective *that*. The noun clause that follows a mandative word is construed either with *that* or without it. The clauses that have *that* count up to 175, while those without only twenty-seven. From this distribution, the connective *that* may be considered to be almost as a requirement, since it is used both in narrative parts and directly quoted speech parts. As is said above, the reason for the preference of the connective may be sought in the theme of the books surveyed here. Many of them deal with earlier periods such as the Colonial period and the formal and "archaic" construction with *that* is preferred to create an atmosphere of supposedly good old days.

Another interesting finding is the distribution of the voices. Of all the 552 instances, 492 are active voice and the remaining sixty are passives. In the percentage terms, actives are about 89% and the passives about 11%. The low occurrence of the passive mandative constructions may have something to do with the low occurrence of the passive imperative

constructions. The mandative construction has at its base the "command" or imperative nature, and it is considered to be an indirect speech of the imperative construction. This is clear from the fact that 'He demanded us, "Include me."' can be rewritten as "He demanded that we include him." Furthermore, the imperative construction seems to prefer an active voice construction. Thus, the low distribution of the passive voice in the mandative constructions may be said to reflect that of the imperative construction.

There is also an interesting finding, that is, the negative construction is extremely low in occurrence. There are only thirty-four negative construction instances, while there are 518 affirmatives. The negatives occupy mere 6% of the total mandative constructions.

From the above survey, several things have been found as to the mandative constructions in the bestselling books of 1900. The most important finding is the fact that in 1900 bestsellers the mandative construction with the connective *that* and the auxiliary *should* is very common, second to the infinitive construction. This is very curious, since the *should* cosntruction is usually thought of as British. In 1998 it is very low in occurrence and in 1948 it is as common as the mandative subjunctive construction. What makes 1900 different from 1998 and 1948 may be sought in the themes of the books. Many of 1900 books deal with the olden times of America and even with England, as a result the authors may have employed supposedly archaic and British-sounding English usage, which is identified with the *should* mandative construction. If we just look at the number of the occurrence of the *should* construction, we may say that the *should* construction is in the decline and has become rare in American English, having been replaced by the mandative subjunctive, which is now considered the American mandative construction. The latter, however, does not appear in the

materials surveyed for 1900. The total number of instances of this type with and without the connective *that* is mere thirty-four out of the total mandative construction instances of 552. The paucity of the instances of this type is surprising. The reason for this is not clear, but it may be attributed to the possible explanation given above about the great occurrence of the *should* construction.

Also interesting is that the infinitve construction is the most common and the reason for its being preferred may be due to its brevity, speediness, and colloquialness of the style. This preference is equally seen in 1998 and 1948, too. Also common to the three periods of 1900, 1948, and 1998 is the extremely low occurrence of the negatives and passives. Likewise, the presence of the connective that seems very established. There are only twenty-seven instances of the clause construction without the connective, while that with *that* is 175 instances.

Notes

1 . Masao Mima. "Mandative Subjunctive in American English; the usage in the 1998 bestselling fictions and non-fictions," *International Studies* (Faculty of International Human Studies. Kagoshima Immaculate Heart University) 10 (2004), 105-120, and "Mandative Subjunctive in American Bestsellers of 1948," *International Studies* (Faculty of International Human Studies. Kagoshima Immaculate Heart University) 13 (2007), 101-116.

2 . "1900s bestsellers," http://www.caderbooks.com/best 00. html//

3 . Eva-Liisa Fillbrandt, "The Development of the Mandative Subjunctive in the Early Modern English Period," *TRAMES*, 10 (60/55), 2 (2006), p. 149.

4 . *Ibid.*, p. 140.

5 . Leon Kellner, *Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, ed. wtih notes and glossary by Kikuo Miyabe, Kenkyusha 7th ed., 1972, p. 235

6 . F. Th. Visser, *An Historical Syntax of the English Language. Part 3, 1st Half. Syntactical*

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