

Lesson 7

Use of *should* for ‘suggestions’, ‘opinions’, ‘feelings’ (Gethin, 11F, pp. 136-138)

1. In rather the same way as we use *would* or *could* for wishes we can use *should* for **demands, consent, suggestions or recommendations, opinions** expressed with *it is / was + adjective* and **feelings** such as **surprise, regret and indignation**.

2. The effect of using *should* is to keep what may happen or what has happened as **non-fact**, rather than let it join the world of possible or past fact. When, for example, we ask ourselves ‘*Why should she have changed her mind?*’ we are not yet quite ready to accept the fact that she **has** changed it. Without the *should*, we have accepted it.

3. The common use of *should* in this way is in *that* clauses which take the place of an *-ing* construction or the infinitive with or without *for*. When used for **feelings**, *should* is an addition.

4. There are some forms of **rhetorical question**, i.e., a question which does not expect an answer, expressing surprise or indignation in which *should* is always used:

She asked me where Lucy was. How should I know?

5. *Should* used in the way described above and also after ***in case*** and ***if*** is called **putative should**.

It **cannot** be replaced by *would* or *ought to*, and **cannot** be contracted to ‘*d*. It may be regarded as a substitute for the present subjunctive which, although not as common in British as in American English, does occur in fairly formal language, particularly in demands and suggestions:

Helen insisted that I be her partner. She suggested that Willie be asked to join us.

In verbs other than *to be* the present subjunctive is recognisable only in the third person singular (there is no ending *-s*):

She suggested that Willie join us.