

UNREAL CONDITIONALS

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Unreal conditionals express conditions that are presented as contrary to reality or not fulfilled.

They are used both for past situations that did not happen and for present situations treated as unreal or unattainable.

1. Function

Unreal conditionals are used to express:

- unreal past conditions (regret, missed opportunity),
- unreal present conditions (hypothetical evaluation),
- criticism or retrospective judgment.

2. Forms

Unreal conditionals are formed with:

- the conditional marker –sA, and
- the past copula –DI.

Suffix shapes:

- –sA → sa / se
- Past Copula stem –DI → dı / di / du / dü

3. Morphology

The conditional suffix –sA does not encode tense by itself.

Unreality is expressed through the past copula –DI following the conditional form.

Affirmative structural order

Verb stem → –sA → –(y)DI → personal ending

The buffer consonant –y– appears because –sA ends in a vowel.

Unreal Conditional Personal Forms (example base: gel-)

- gelseydim
- gelseydin
- gelseydi
- gelseydik
- gelseydiniz
- gelselerdi

Variation Note

The form **gelseydiler** is also widely used in spoken Turkish.

While **gelselerdi** is the standard and preferred form in reference grammars, **gelseydiler** commonly appears in everyday speech and is generally understood as equivalent in meaning.

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Negative Formation

Negation is expressed with –mA, which precedes the conditional suffix.

Negative structural order

Verb stem → –mA → –sA → –(y)DI → personal ending

No buffer consonant appears between –mA and –sA.

Negative Unreal Conditional Personal Forms

- gelmeseydim
- gelmeseydin
- gelmeseydi
- gelmeseydik
- gelmeseydiniz
- gelmeselerdi

4. Structural Formation

Basic structure:

Unreal conditional clause + result clause

The unreal conditional clause may precede or follow the result clause.

Result Clause Forms

The result clause typically expresses an unreal outcome and appears with past-marked forms:

- giderdim / alırdım / yapardım
- (Aorist + Past Copula)
- gelecektim / yapacaktım
- (Future + Past Copula)

5. Usage

Unreal past

Used to express regret, criticism, or missed opportunity.

Unreal present

Used to evaluate a situation treated as unreal or unattainable.

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Examples

- Dün bana söyleseydin, gelirdim.
- (If you had told me yesterday, I would have come.)
- Param olsaydı, alırdım.
- (If I had money, I would buy it.)
- Vaktim olsaydı, giderdim.
- (If I had time, I would go.)
- Keşke burada olsaydın.
- (I wish you were here.)
- Keşke gelmeseydin.
- (I wish you had not come.)

Notes

- Unreal conditionals are formed with –sA + past copula –DI, not with the tense suffix –DI directly on the verb stem.
- After –sA, the past copula normally appears with the buffer –y– because –sA ends in a vowel.
- In the third person plural, the plural marker –ler appears after –sA and before –DI, and the buffer –y– is not used because –ler ends in a consonant.
- Negation precedes –sA: Verb stem → –mA → –sA → –(y)DI → personal ending.